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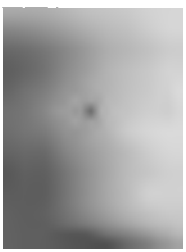

MARIAN WITHERS.

BY

GERALDINE E. JEWSBURY,

AUTHOR OF "ZOE," "THE HALF-SISTERS," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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TO

MY BROTHER FRANK,

AND MY FRIENDS

LAMBERT BEY

AND

STAUROS DILBEROGLUE,

This Book

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

August 7, 1851.

INTRODUCTION.

When people sit down to write a novel, they are apt to find themselves in the situation described by the young lady in that charming book by Mary Lamb, the *History of Mrs. Leicester's School,* who, when called upon to write a children's play, could think of nothing but a secret which she had surprised, and which, although of the greatest moment to herself, she could not resist writing down just as it had occurred, because she could *invent* nothing half so good.

If there were not an immense power of discretion latent in the world, the revelations of private life that would ensue from the unlocking of all the "perilous stuff" which most people possess, in their knowledge of the secret passages in the history of the men and women amongst whom they move, would make dreadful confusion in the "hearts and homes" of the public in general. We all of us live in a world of inedited romance; but as every man is concealed behind a veil of flesh, which is impenetrable even whilst it serves to make him visible, nothing can be absolutely known that is not declared—and absorbed as each one is in his own personal interests, half the dramas that are transacted before our very eyes remain unseen and unsuspected. The possessor of an estate may be ignorant of a mine of metallic wealth lying beneath

the surface, until some day he chances to strike his foot against a stone, and so develope the first step towards a discovery.

For ourselves, we have always lived among the most ordinary and natural-looking routine of things, ignorant alike of difficulties and mysteries, and yet the day came when we saw "things that did not appear." We have seen and conversed with most of the persons named in this tale; we knew them at the crisis of their fate; and yet, engrossed by the detail of our own personalities, we never suspected the complicated game of human interests and passions which were fermenting beneath the surface of the balls and dinner-parties, and all the ordinary intercourse of society. Some of the individuals most concerned in the following history are dead, others have gone into distant countries, where it is highly improbable that

these pages will meet their eyes; and, even if they should, no inconvenience can result to the parties themselves; for care has been taken that none of the characters shall be identified by the cleverest or most merciless exercise of curiosity.

The narrative form has been adopted as the most convenient, and our personal share in the transactions must be left to the discernment of our readers.

THE HISTORY

OF

MARIAN WITHERS.

CHAPTER I.

It was a regular Manchester wet day, of more than ordinary discomfort! The rain came down with a steady, heavy determination, aggravated from time to time to an emphatic energy by gusts of wind, which swept down the streets, rippling the puddles which had gathered in the uneven flags, and rendering all attempts to shelter under an umbrella entirely vain. The atmosphere was a murky composition of

soot and water, which rendered the daylight only a few shades brighter than night. Nothing could be discerned beyond the distance of few yards, the sky and the earth being seemingly mixed together in a disorganised fog. Few persons were in the streets, for nearly everyone had sought shelter in the vain hope that the rain was too violent to continue.

On such a day, in the year of grace, 1794, a lady was sitting in the window of a house in St. James's-square, which was then a fashionable locality, solacing herself with a novel, whence her attention was attracted by hearing two small childish voices singing, in dismal melody,

> "Give us some food for our mother in charity;
> Give us some food and we will be gone!"

On looking into the street, she perceived a boy and girl proceeding slowly and pain-

fully along, half-drowned by the strong rain, from which the boy, who was apparently the elder, attempted to shield his companion by wrapping his ragged jacket round her. The lady no sooner perceived them than she flung away her book, and called them into the house; the dead tramp of their little naked feet over the pavement, and the wet which ran in streams from their ragged clothes, was a pitiful sight, and put all idea of thieves or impostors out of her head: their misery was real and visible. She led them to the kitchen fire, where they were warmed and fed — the little boy showing great anxiety that his sister should be the first attended to, and have the best of all that was given to them. They told a pitiful tale. Their father had been killed by a fall from a ladder, and their mother, who worked at a factory, was lying ill of a

fever, and they had nothing to live upon but what the parish allowed them, and their last money had been stolen from the mantelshelf of the cellar where they lived. The children were sent home much better clad than they had come out, and Miss Fenwick (which was the lady's name) sat up half the night to make a supply of clothing for the sick mother; and the next morning she despatched her servant with medicine and nourishing food to Back Garden-street, where they said they lived.

The servant was a powerful woman, of very resolute character, but her heart failed her as she entered this region of loathsome sights and intolerable stench, where all the refuse, slops, and filth thrown from the houses and cellars were putrefying in the street. It was here that thieves, wretched women, ruffians, the offscouring of the worst class, had their place to dwell. It was *here* that

they were *at home*. They might emerge from these depths to the fair surface of society which lay in daylight, but it was only to beg, to steal, or to commit outrage,—this was their only intercourse with it; and this accomplished, they disappeared again, none knowing or caring whither,—for they belonged to nothing there. But *here* they were the lawful inhabitants of the place, and the intrusion of a respectable person was as much resented by these outcasts as was their own when repulsed by those dwelling within the cordon of prisons, police-officers, and magistrates.

A general movement took place when the servant, carrying her basket, came in sight. The children left off playing or fighting, as it might be, to stare and make game. Great hulking men, with pipes in their mouths, were seen hanging at the door-posts, and fierce, disorderly-looking

women, who struck her with still more dread. However, she was a resolute woman, and not disposed to abandon her errand without a trial. She entered a pawnbroker's shop, which stood opposite, and seemed the nearest approach to anything decent.

"I'm thinking you'd best go no further, good woman; they are a rough set down yond'."

"It's a poor widow, lying very badly, I'm come to see, and I would not like her to be lost for want, if she does live in a rough neighbourhood. I'll go on now, as I am got so far, if you can tell me where to find her."

"My young man shall show you the way, if you are set on it; they know him, and he will see they don't harm you."

Under the guidance of the pawnbroker's young man, she entered a dark passage,

called "No. 3 entry," and emerged into a court the size of a moderate room; the houses were many degrees more miserable and dilapidated than in the street she had left. The lower storeys of the house were let off as cellars, the entrance to which was down a flight of broken steps, into a passage from which the light had been almost entirely excluded by the door-steps of the houses above, which arched it in. At the last door in this passage the young man knocked, and entered. A woman, in a helpless state of intoxication, was lying on a bed in one corner; and beside the fire sat the little boy, who had been ballad-singing the previous day; he was dressed in his former rags. When he first caught sight of the servant and her basket, he held down his head, but a moment after he looked up and laughed impudently in her face.

"What's to do you are at home to-day, Jack?" asked the young man.

"Mammy beat me, and I wunna go out to beg for her, and she's too drunk to make me."

"Where's your sister?" asked the servant, who now began to be really frightened.

"She is no sister of his, only a child he goes out with."

"The little brazen impostors!"

The child looked at her with an impish malignity, which gave a preternatural age to his young face.

"You bad boy, where do you expect to go to?"

"They won't stand no words, young woman; we shall have a row if you don't mind."

The cellar was at this moment darkened by the entrance of a great, athletic fellow, dressed as a distressed sailor, in a torn and

dirty checked shirt, his right eye covered with a patch, and one arm in a sling.

"This young woman heard your wife was sick, from the lad yesterday, and she came to see if she wanted aught," said the young man in a deprecating tone.

"She'd best be off to them as sent her —we want none of her stuff here."

As he spoke, he gave a kick to the child that sent him against the side of the room, and began to light his pipe at a coal. The pawnbroker's young man had not struck Mary as a very desirable acquaintance, but *now* she clung to his arm, saying, in an anxious tone, "Dear sir, let us go, shall I leave my basket?"

"Put it down, and be off with you," growled the sailor, with a ferocious oath.

"The likes of you should not come into these places," said the young man,

when they reached the street; "it's noways safe to go visiting beggars, and that young'un will catch it for bringing you to the right place."

Poor Mary could hardly stand by the time she reached home, and it was some time before she could find breath to tell her mistress her perils and adventures.

"To think of the deceit of them young things!" cried she, as she ended. "I wonder the earth does not open under them; but they will be hanged at last, that's one mercy!"

"Poor things!" said Miss Fenwick, in a voice of deep pity; "born to an inheritance of crime, how can they escape? What chance have they to do better? Oh, if one *could* save them!"

"Well, Miss Fenwick, I don't expect you will send *me* to look after beggars again; it is no part of my work." Mary was tired, had been terribly frightened, and was out

of all patience at the pity her mistress had expressed.

Miss Fenwick had never before realised the horrible condition of these outcast children lying in wickedness; now it was brought home to her with terrible force. A whole "Satan's invisible world" was displayed to her, and she could not again become indifferent. She lay awake all that night, trying to think if something could not be done.

Two days after the above adventure, as Miss Fenwick was walking down London-road, she heard a faint singing in children's voices—

"Give us some food and let us be gone!"

It was her two little impostors. She went up to them from an impulse she could not resist.

"Come home with me, both of you," she said. The boy looked saucy—the girl

frightened. "Come with me as I tell you, it will be better for you."

"Then you wunna let the runners tak' us?"

"No, not if you come quietly. I mean you no harm."

She took hold of a dirty hand of each child, and led them away, holding them fast until she arrived at her own door.

The surprise of Mary when she beheld them may be conceived. The boy made an effort to escape when he saw her look of indignation.

"Dunna let that woman tak' us."

"No harm shall happen to you, I promise," said Miss Fenwick. "Come, go into the house like good children."

They went in submissively; but Mary flounced back to her kitchen, muttering something about little thieves letting in great ones.

The children looked even more miserable than on the previous day. The girl's eye was bruised and black, marks of blows were visible upon her little thin arms, and the boy also bore traces of a severe beating. Miss Fenwick regaled them upon some hot bread and milk, and they became more communicative.

"Who has been hurting you in that way?"

"Daddy beat me 'cause I telled you where we lived."

"Is he your own daddy?"

"No; I belonged to a beggar woman when I was a little 'un, and she gived me to they in the cellar."

"Is this your sister?"

"No; she's like me, and has had nobody belonging to her since her mammy died."

"Well, would you like somebody to belong to you?"

"Ay, if they wouldna beat me."

"Would you like to learn to work?"

The child stared at her.

"Would you like to get away from that cellar, and earn money for yourself?"

"I wunna leave *her*," said the boy, pointing to the girl, "they would kill her by hersel."

Miss Fenwick had now the opportunity she had so earnestly wished for. At least two of the outcast children of vice were at her disposal; and she willingly accepted the charge of these poor little heathens in a Christian land.

CHAPTER II.

It was a busy morning at the workhouse. A batch of boys were to be despatched per wagon to be bound apprentices to the art and mystery of cotton-spinning, at the Union Mills, Appleby, in Staffordshire. They had a better breakfast than usual, and they were afterwards called into the board-room to be exhorted by two portly gentlemen, who, sitting at a table with a pile of papers before them, enforced their good advice by the gift of a penny to each, and the aphorism, that "if they were good

boys and did not steal, somebody would always give them something."

Amongst these boys was Miss Fenwick's protégé, John Withers. He had received a proper name, and was now decently clothed; and altogether so much improved, that no one could have recognised in him the miserable little wretch singing in the streets.

Both the children had been received into the workhouse; and though at the lowest point of the social thermometer, they had become, as it were, baptised and recognised members of the community. The girl had been removed by Miss Fenwick into a school which she and some other ladies had established, where a certain number of girls were trained for domestic servants. As she was doubtful about her real name, having always gone by the soubriquet of "Lost Molly," it was determined to call

her Alice Withers. The two children were much attached; they were the nearest approach to a relation they either of them possessed in the world.

The good conduct of John Withers, during his stay in the workhouse, was quite wonderful; it was founded, in the first instance, on the fear he had of being sent away, for his former mode of life had inspired him with horror, and he would not unfrequently awake with shrieks, from a frightful dream that he was in the old cellar, and the sailor was tying him down that he should not escape again. He had learned to read a little during his sojourn in the workhouse; having once picked up a copy of "Whittington and his Cat," it had made a deep impression upon him, and he burned with the idea of "going to seek his fortune," and becoming a great man. The decree of the churchwardens,

that he should be bound apprentice, seemed the first step towards realising his vision. His sister, as he called her, wept bitterly when she heard he was going away; but he comforted her as well as he could, with the example of his hero, and gave her the penny that had been bestowed upon him.

When the little band arrived at Appleby, they were boarded, along with many others, in a large building erected for the purpose: it was both clean and airy, and in a healthy situation. Parish apprentices and children working in factories were not always victims to ill-treatment. The apprentice system had many faults—too much was in the power of the masters, who were irresponsible; it is well abolished. But these children were in Christian hands; and though they worked long hours, they were well lodged, well fed, and well treated, and had no cause of complaint.

John Withers made himself remarked by his good conduct: the master and mistress never had occasion to make a complaint against him. John had cherished, in secret, a great ambition to learn to write; but in those days that was considered a very superfluous accomplishment for the poor. He tried to copy printed letters out of books whenever he could find a pen and a scrap of paper.

A bad fever broke out amongst the apprentices, and John Withers made himself very useful in the midst of it, and showed besides a most good-hearted disposition. The master and mistress gave him great praise, and the owner of the mills sent for him into the counting-house, and told him he should have anything he had a mind for.

John had often thought what he would say if a good fairy were to give him a "wish," and he had quite made up his

mind what he would ask for; but he had never been brought into such an august presence before, and his heart nearly failed him when he saw the great man standing with his back to the fire-place, in a blue coat with bright buttons and a buff waistcoat, with his hand buried in the plentiful ruffle of a snow-white shirt. He seemed to John a more awful object than all the fairies, good or bad, in *Mother Bunch's Chronicle.*

"Come man, speak out," said the great man with a good-humoured impatience; and poor John, finding confidence in the very extremity of his dread lest the occasion should pass away, stammered out his desire to learn to write. "To write, is it!" replied his master with a sort of whistle; "what are you ever likely to want with writing? You had better choose something that will do you more good—a new

suit of clothes, and a bran new guinea to put in the pockets, eh?"

"Oh, please, sir, do let me learn to write," said John, earnestly; "I would rather have that, than all the new clothes in the world."

"Well, well, you shall not be baulked; the master here will let you go to the clerk twice a week of an evening, and here is a guinea to buy your copybooks."

Thus sanctioned, John ardently pursued the mysteries of pothooks and ladles and straight strokes, till he was promoted to the dignity of "running hand."

The first use he made of his accomplishment was to write a letter to his sister, and send her half of his store of money.

* * * * *

So years passed on. John Withers grew out of his apprenticeship and became a workman on his own account, earning

good wages. After a time he left Appleby, and went to work at a mill in Lancashire, where the machinery was somewhat different. Cotton-spinning was then in its infancy, and the intelligence of the workman was more called upon than it is at present, when the machine does everything, and the man has only to wait upon it.

John Withers was a good and skilful workman; he had kept up his character for sobriety and good conduct, but the visions of making his fortune had long since been blotted out by the monotonous task-work which every day brought with it. He seemed to be fixed in a condition where he could not be said to "lead his life," but where he was driven to plod onwards in a beaten path hedged up on each hand by hunger and misery. Capacities of which he dreamed not were, however, lying

hidden within him, like a gold mine in a barren land.

One day, when he was working as usual at his "mule," some portion of the machinery got out of gearing. He was greatly annoyed, because it interfered with his "over-time," by which he was hoping to increase the amount of his week's wages.

He examined into the damage, and on the spur of the moment supplied an expedient which carried his machine to the end of that day's work.

This accident proved the crisis of his life: a faculty had been awakened which had never stirred before.

Henceforth all his labour was in a new spirit. The machine had become to him a living creature; he had obtained an insight into the power which moved it.

CHAPTER III.

A FEW weeks after John Withers's first essay in mechanics, an idea of the possibility of making a more simple machine than the one he worked at, and one at the same time capable of producing a greater amount of work, struck him like a flash of inspiration; he went home to brood over it, and to work at it.

Every farthing of money that could be spared from his barest necessaries went to buy tools and books.

For two years he worked secretly in his garret after the labour of the day, often

tying a rope tightly round his waist to deaden the craving sense of hunger, and inventing all manner of expedients to keep off sleep.

He lacked practical dexterity as a mechanic, and was, besides, entirely ignorant of the first principles of the science.

He worked on, however, through failures and mistakes, with a will as iron as the tools he used; his IDEA possessed him like a demon, and haunted him night and day.

At length he found that he must slacken his attendance either at the factory or upon his models; he had not strength for both.

The result of his labours was, as yet, very imperfect; he had realised nothing towards his idea; but with that sublime undoubting faith which, according to its success, stamps men either as heroes or visionaries, he determined to sacrifice the factory to the models.

"You see," he used to say, when relating the history of this part of his life, "I was half mad and half desperate like; my head was fairly mazed, and it seemed as if it would burst. I knew what I wanted, but I could not make it out with my bits of models, for want of time to sit to them when I was not heavy with sleep. I did not properly believe I should come to want, I felt sure I should manage some road. I could not do different, and so I gave my work the sack,"

That he did *not* die of hunger was something of a miracle. His early habits of privation stood him in great stead. He had endured the realities of cold and hunger so long that they were familiar. It was not likely that the *fear* of them would be a hindrance now.

Early in a morning, before any of the neighbours were stirring, he would go into

the streets, especially into the market-place, where he picked up scraps of vegetables, pieces of bread, or food of any kind that had been thrown away. With this he would return to his garret, which he did not again leave that day.

As may be imagined, this mode of keeping life together was precarious in the extreme. It was a remarkably severe winter, and he had to suffer great straits; but the horror of his early begging experiences was so strong, that he never once resumed asking charity. Yet want is fierce, and nature is weak. Once there was a hard frost for several weeks. An east wind blew over the wold; the snow lay thick on the ground, and people began to fancy that England and Siberia must be much of a piece. Poor John in his garret, without fire, without food, almost without clothes, with only a heap of shavings for

his bed, was in a sufficiently bad plight. His benumbed fingers could scarcely hold his tools, and with the chisel he inflicted a severe wound upon his left hand, which the frost inflamed, and for several days he could not work at his models. During this suspension he was tempted sorely to seek for some alleviation. To the parish he did not dare to apply, because he would at once have been ordered to some employment, and he could not endure to betray the secret of his dear models. One facile mode there was — he might ask charity: at that bitter time, which happened to be Christmas besides, it would scarcely have been refused.

He descended from his garret in the dusk of a December twilight, and took his station at the corner of the most frequented street. The recollection of the old times when he used to go out with his

sister came upon him—the forgotten slang and manner of his old trade returned to his memory, and with it the memory of the misery, the degradation and brutality in which he had been plunged—the lame sailor—the drunken woman—the savage blows and kicks inflicted on himself and his sister the last day he was in the cellar—but worse than these were the masonic signs of recognition from the regular mendicants.

"And am I going to fall back into all that?" he thought. "What a cowardly beast I am! What I am suffering is nothing more than I bore then every day!" His hand throbbed with pain; he was sick for want of food; it was forty-eight hours since he had tasted anything. The intense bodily sensations of hunger, cold, and pain, were more imperative and emphatic than the voice of his resolution. A portly,

comfortable, benevolent-looking old lady was coming across the street; she came close to where he stood; he attempted to speak, but a deep shame stopped him at the moment she turned her head to see who was addressing her.

"Do you want anything, my good man?"

"No, ma'am: I thought you were losing something."

"Well, bless me, if my fur tippet is not loose: I thought I felt cold—thank you, kindly;" and the comfortable, well-clad, woman passed on.

John moved dejectedly away. He was glad he had not begged, but he was giddy with cold and hunger. He went on, he hardly knew whither, till he was stopped by a large heap of coals which lay before a house. A decent-looking woman stood at the door, looking up and down the street, apparently in great perplexity.

"Here, my good man," said she, perceiving John, "these coals have been brought in at a shameful time of night, and the man has gone away, and just left me to manage as I can. If you will stop and get them in for me, I will give you sixpence and a mug of beer. It will not take you long."

Her voice was like the voice of an angel to poor John. He seized a spade with alacrity, and gathered in the coals to the good woman's perfect contentment, who gave him a plate of broken meat as well as the promised reward. To poor John it was like the feast of Dives, and better than all was his thankfulness at having been restrained from begging.

But the "fightings without" were nothing in comparison to the "fears within." Unforeseen difficulties were constantly arising in his work; failure after failure, when he felt most certain of success, came to

shake his faith in his own inspirations. At last the unflinching energy of his nature was strengthened by a fearful ally—he was hovering on the verge of MADNESS. His labour became the obstinate monomania of a fixed idea. He went on and on with the accelerated energy generated from his previous efforts.

Thus he worked under the shadow of madness: his only guides were his unsuccessful efforts: every failure became for a short time luminous, lighting up his path for a few steps.

At last he completed a model that worked successfully!

He had compelled his idea to assume an adequate shape, to interpenetrate the wood and iron, and to work them flexibly, as the body is wrought by the soul.

The demon which had possessed him, which had fed upon his life and upon his

reason, was now exorcised: it had entered into his work, and he beheld it peacefully and orderly performing that which he had given it to do.

The revulsion of feeling was too strong, and he sank upon the ground beside his model in a fit of hysterical weeping.

The stimulus which had so long supported him was withdrawn, and both body and mind fell collapsed.

With something of presentiment he arose, and with the last struggle of expiring energy, he took his model to pieces and put it in an old box, his only article of furniture; and then, with limbs all weak and wasted, and with the tears he could not restrain running down his cheeks, he wandered into the street. After a few steps he was unable to support himself; he made a clutch at some iron railings, but missed his hold, and fell heavily under the wheels

of a coach which was passing at that moment. He was picked up by the bystanders and carried to the hospital.

The actual injury he had sustained from the accident was trifling, but all his faculties seemed to have been blotted out; his strength was prostrate, and he remained for a month in a state resembling idiocy.

At length he awoke as from a sleep, gradually his brain recovered its consistency — the recollection of the past came upon him: but his recovery was slow, and it was full three months before he could be discharged.

His first care was to see whether his treasure was safe. During the latter part of his convalescence, he had been haunted by many fears and fancies respecting it. The people in the house where he had lived had long ago given up all expectation of seeing him again. The box which contained his

precious treasure had been overlooked for a long time, or else the probabilities are that it would have been used for fire-wood. As it was, it had a narrow escape. A few days before he returned, some children belonging to one of the lodgers, in exploring a dark landing place, found the box filled with curious-looking wheels and straps, which, of course, they seized for playthings.

The first thing that met poor John's gaze were some of his delicate wheels lying upon the door steps, and some little urchins disputing about the possession of the leather straps, to make "suckers."

John's dismay may be conceived — he rescued the remnants of his model, and with an effort of desperate courage, he proceeded to his old garret to see how far the destruction had been carried. The box stood empty! For a few moments he was entirely bereft of feeling—he sat down upon

the lid of the box with a smile of despair, vacantly gazing upon the fragments in his hand. At length an old woman, who had lodged in the next room to him, came hobbling and panting upstairs. She perceived him, and addressed him, but he did not hear her. Going into her room, she returned with her arm full of spindles and wheels similar to those he held.

"See thee here!" said she, shaking him; "when them imps of children got to thy trunk I knew what they would be after, and so I just taked away all I could; I knew thou wert a'most killed to mak' them, and I just thought I'd keep 'em to see if thou would come back, for I knew thou would be fair wild to find them all gone; and where have ye been this long sight?"

John had been very kind to this old creature, so far as lay in his power, and she was the only being in the world to whom

his return to life was a matter of interest; she made John take up his abode with her. The mischief to the model was not irreparable, and it was soon restored, with improvements.

Difficulties, however, of another kind arose, which were almost more perplexing for him; he was like a man who, having discovered a gold mine, lacks the means to get at the contents. After considering the matter over, to the best of his ability, he determined to go to his old master at Appleby, and to give him the first offer of his invention. He had on leaving the hospital received a few shillings from the surgeon, who had taken great interest in his case, and this would pay all his expenses. He had no luggage except his precious model. The old woman who had taken charge of his box washed the fragments of his only shirt, which he carefully made into a bundle, till

he should reach the end of his journey, in order that he might appear as decent as possible before his old master. Thus provided, he set out on his travels, nothing doubting.

Footsore and weary, he arrived at Appleby. The village was thronged with men and women hanging on the door-steps, or eagerly talking together in groups; all faces looked black and anxious. It was evident that no work was going on, but it was a most sinister-looking holiday. He joined a knot of men who were standing in the road, and inquired the reason: the answer made his heart sink within him. The master had failed, the mill had stopped work, and all the hands were thrown out of employ. This was the third day since these things had happened. After the first sickening shock of despair had passed away, hope revived in the heart of John Withers

"Perhaps I am bringing him the means of making his fortune again," thought he, and he pressed on to the master's house. He had difficulty in gaining admittance: the master was busy with gentlemen on business, and could see no one. At length his importunity prevailed, and he was ushered in.

"Well, my man, what is this business of consequence to me?" asked his old master, looking up from the large ledger over which he was poring. "Speak quickly, for I have no time to waste."

The master had altogether forgotten the existence of John Withers—if, indeed, he had ever been distinctly cognizant of the fact—but on John the impression he had made was never to be effaced; and though now he looked broken and defaced, and very far gone from the original glory of his bright buttons and snowy cambric frill, in John's

eyes, he was still the greatest person in the world. After making a most reverential bow, he stood quite abashed, and unable to explain his errand. Several gentlemen were sitting round a table, and this added to his embarrassment. "Come, man, what is it? Speak out. I am very sorry for all your distress; it is a bad business, but I am as ill off as any of you."

"It is not about that sir. Mayhap you do not remember me. I am the poor boy you let be taught to write, and I have brought something that will perhaps bring the old mill round again."

It was a bad time for explanations, but John pulled out his rude drawings and began to explain. He was proceeding to take his model out of the box, when one of the gentlemen said, roughly, "Come, come, we have no time for this fooling. Give the fellow sixpence, and send him off."

But another party who had been looking at the drawings said, after poor John had retired, "It is my opinion we might make a good thing of that fellow's idea, if we could get it, and keep it to ourselves."

"You are always full of schemes," rejoined another, contemptuously; "what is the good of them except to ruin the people who trust them? We have no good money here to throw after bad." The matter dropped, and they proceeded with their investigation of the books, which had been interrupted.

John Withers sat down under a hedge with his box beside him—weary, faint with hunger, and utterly discouraged. He saw how hard it was to get gentlefolks to listen; and perhaps he had for the first time *realised* the great distance there was between himself and them, and it was that more than anything else which made him

despond so bitterly. He felt hopeless of ever making himself or his invention regarded by them. He was now reckless what became of him, and he hoped he was going to die.

A gentleman, passing along the road, stopped before him, and said, "My man, I want to see that model of yours; take up your box, and follow me to the inn."

The voice of the angel to Hagar, perishing in the desert, was not more welcome nor more surprising. He arose briskly, shouldered his box, and followed the stranger in a state of bewilderment. When they reached the inn, he ventured to say,—

"May I be so bold as to ask, sir, who you may be, and how you come to know aught about me?"

"I was in the room when you came this morning, but we had no time to attend to you then."

The stranger ordered him some refreshment, the first John had tasted since the previous day, and then they proceeded to examine the model together. The stranger, whose name was Smith, asked many questions, and carefully inspected the drawings. He saw that it was a good thing, and he determined to secure it for himself. At the same time he was not utterly devoid of conscience, and he was, besides, a far-sighted man; he believed that if John had invented the model he might also improve upon it, and that it would be an advantage to secure him, as well as his invention. He talked a great deal of the trouble, expense, and difficulty there would be in the way of carrying it out. Withers was poor, helpless, and utterly at the mercy of any one who would take advantage of him, and he might have fallen into worse hands. Mr. Smith bound him to

the profoundest secresy, and by way of binding John to him by gratitude he got him the post of overlooker to one of the mills, with a small house, and comfortable salary. The creditors had determined to work the concern of his old master for their own benefit, and he was to carry it on under inspection. This rise in the world seemed to poor John Withers like going to heaven at once, and he would have promised anything to his benefactor; but Mr. Smith had, as we said, a conscience, and, besides, he had an eye to the future, when John Withers should become better aware of the value of what he had done. John went on very comfortably in his new situation; he was now able to buy books, and as he still kept up his old habits of privation, every farthing beyond what went for the barest necessaries was spent upon the means needed to enable him to carry

out a new idea which had struck him for the further improvement of cotton-spinning machinery.

One day he was surprised and almost frightened by the appearance of a legal gentleman, who called with a bundle of papers tied up with red tape, as John was at his dinner.

The legal gentleman explained to John that his "benefactor" (as he styled Mr. Smith) had, at a vast expense, taken out a patent for John's "little invention,"and had now sent to offer John one thousand pounds down to surrender his claims to the same. The lawyer was licensed to go much higher in his offers, but he expatiated at great length upon Mr. Smith's generosity and honour in offering to pay for what he might have taken for nothing.

"Right is right," said John, sturdily; "and Mr. Smith will not prosper the worse

for doing the honest thing. It would be beneath a gentleman to wrong a poor man. However, he has been kind to me, and if he can use the invention, I would rather he had it than another. In regard to the thousand pounds, I am quite agreeable to take it. The invention is his to do the best he can with it, and I wish him a good bargain. If he be satisfied, I am satisfied."

The agreement was signed—the money was paid. Mr. Smith not only realised an immense fortune, but he had in his day the entire credit of being the originator of John's invention, His conscience always assured him that he had acted most nobly by John Withers, and it never disturbed him on the score of his borrowed credit. John said nothing to any one about this occurrence; he put the money in the Bank of England against the day when he might build a factory for himself.

His adopted sister was all this time in a respectable service in Manchester. John Withers did not forget her in his prosperity. He frequently wrote to her, and sent her presents whenever the opportunity offered. She was the only tie he had in the world, and he entertained a sincere affection for her, but he was far from suspecting that she loved him with all her heart, and for his sake kept all followers at a distance.

A certain intercourse naturally arose between John and his old master. John never forgot the reverence with which the blue coat and its shining buttons, and the broad-frilled shirt had originally inspired him, nor his gratitude for being taught to write. To John he always remained his "old master." The old gentleman never properly held up his head after his misfortunes; he pined and dwindled away, and

finally died, within two years of his failure, without any tangible complaint.

He left one daughter entirely destitute. She was taken by a charitable friend until she could find some situation as nursery governess, or lady's maid, or companion, or some mode of gaining her bread which should not militate against her previous notions of gentility. John found himself very anxious as to what would become of her. He attended the sale of his old master's effects, and bought in some small articles which he thought she would like to possess. The arm-chair he bought for himself, as a remembrance of him who was gone. But all this did not satisfy him; the destitute condition of his master's daughter was not ameliorated. He called upon her and was shown into the room where she sat, clad in deep mourning, doing crotchet-work. She had a pale insipid face, fur-

nished with stiffly-arranged curls of a yellowish-red colour; her light gray eyes looked sore with weeping, and she seemed so helpless and unfit to make her own way in the world, that John felt his compassion become extremely emphatic. In the course of the interview, he was struck by an idea the brightness of which almost startled him! He pondered over it during the night, and in the morning it had assumed the aspect of a deliberate plan. He dressed himself carefully, and made the best of his appearance which was sturdy, and somewhat coarse; but his face was redeemed from vulgarity, not only by his shrewd, intelligent, black eyes, but also by a look of kindness and honesty which endued his commonly-shaped features with something like good looks. Dressed in the new suit of black he had ordered in memory of his master, he again waited on the lady, and

with much delicacy and real good feeling, made her an offer of his hand and heart, and a home, such as it was! The young lady requested time to consider; she did not absolutely discourage him, but she had cherished pale ideas of officers and moustaches; and there was a certain spruce young dissenting minister whom she had met at sundry Sunday-school meetings, for whom she had indulged a tepid preference, and it was not all at once that she could become reconciled to the somewhat dingy-looking reality offered to her acceptance. The friend with whom she was staying was a managing woman, who gloried in her "common sense" and freedom from all "romantic heroics," and she soon talked Emily into the belief that she must accept such a worthy man and such a "providential offer," under the most mysterious penalties of being "thrown upon the world, and see-

ing all her friends turn their backs upon her." Emily was the most inoffensive little creature possible, desirous to please everybody; she had never expressed a positive like or dislike in her life. She was one of those who seem to be born to be ill-treated, not from malice, but as an experiment, to see whether they can be made to feel. She was quickly brought down to her friend's view of the matter; and she married John Withers within two months of her father's death.

John might have done worse—she made him a good little insignificant wife; he was sometimes worried by her extreme inoffensiveness, but she was not extravagant—never wanted more money than he gave her, neither was she vulgar, and imperceptibly she imparted an air of refinement to his manners, which was in keeping with his improving fortunes. When John Withers

sent his sister bride-cake, and a letter, begging her to come and pay a visit to himself and his wife, he was far from surmising the pangs he inflicted.

The poor girl wept bitterly at the destruction of her secret hopes, and for several days she went about like a bewildered creature; but servants have no time to grieve, and a sharp reprimand from her mistress, with the threat of dismissal if she continued to be so careless, braced up her nerves once more. She dried her eyes, wrote back a letter to her "brother," full of good wishes, and gave the bride-cake to the children, who made themselves sick with it.

She was a very good-looking young woman, and more than one young man, well to do in the world, would have been glad to keep company with her; but her heart was now more steeled than ever. She

cut the young man at the baker's; she insulted the handsome young carpenter, who was very energetic in his suit; and locked her deep sorrow in her own bosom, like a Spartan. There was no one to sympathise with her—no one to suspect that she was suffering. Her various lovers, indeed, wondered what could make her look so old and ugly all at once, and then they found other sweethearts more to their taste.

A few months after John's marriage, she went to live in Scotland with the lady who had originally befriended them both, and who was now a widow and in ill-health. By degrees Alice became her companion and friend, and paid back to the fretful invalid the kindness she had formerly bestowed. Her own sorrow was soothed by having some one to be kind to, and she gradually became, if not happy, at least contented.

When her benefactress died, she left to her faithful Alice an annuity and all her wardrobe and furniture.

Alice was now a sort of heiress,—she was past the prime of life but she still had suitors in a superior rank, though it may be not so disinterested as those in the days of old. She, however, turned a deaf ear to them all, and dwelt alone in the cottage where she had resided so many years with her old friend and mistress. Nobody envied her good fortune, but thought it was only what she had deserved,—which says a great deal for the prudence and kindness with which Alice dispensed her property and conducted herself.

Alice never intended to let John Withers see her or hear of her again. Quiet, reserved, gentle natures, which imprison all their emotions deep in their hearts, have always an indomitable fund of pride, which acts as

jailor; and with their quiet silent endurance, and gentle forgiveness, they have the most unrelenting memory for past sorrows and those who have inflicted them. The bitter emotions which John's marriage had at first aroused, became calmed by the lapse of time, but her resolution never wavered. She felt a strange pleasure in thinking that John would often wonder where she was, and it might be, try to discover her, and the satisfaction that he never would, was not bitter or revengeful, but a mild sense that it was only what he deserved; a species of retribution in which the most amiable of women indulge themselves.

An incident happened, however, about three years after the death of her benefactress, which changed the whole tenor of her life.

A young man who came from the neighbourhood of Manchester to see his mother,

called upon Alice, and from him she learned that John Withers had prospered in the world; that he had a fine mill and employed many hands, "who were all well done to; and people came from round and square to see his improvements and inventions."

Alice was proud to hear this, and she ventured to ask what his wife was like; and we are obliged to confess that her human nature was soothed to learn "that his missus was but a poor feckless yea-and-nay body, like an egg without salt, and with no stir or life in her.

"And their daughter?" asked Alice.

"Oh, she is a fine likely lass and takes after her father, tho' she bids fair to be better looking than ever he was."

Alice said no more at that time, but a yearning to renew her intercourse with John was awakened within her; it would

be pleasant to relate to each other the history of all that happened since they parted; there was no one else in the world who would understand it so well; a desire to talk over the past was aroused, all the more imperious for the silence of years. When the young man returned to Manchester, Alice gave him a long letter for John Withers, which he promised faithfully to deliver into his own hands.

A reply soon arrived, which as she declared, "made her cry for fair foolishness." John gently reproached her for keeping herself hidden so long,—told her how often he had wished for her, and entreated her to come and visit them; he spoke a great deal of his daughter, but said nothing of his wife,—not from premeditation, but because it did not occur to him that there was anything to be said.

Alice thought she would go and settle

in the neighbourhood of her "brother;"—she felt for the first time how lonely she was in her cottage with nobody belonging to her, and determined to accept John's invitation, and stop a little while at his house until she could look about her and find a place near them to suit her. Accordingly she disposed of her furniture and arranged her affairs with such expedition that she was at "Burn Brook," the name of John's residence, almost before he had begun to expect her.

She was welcomed with great joy by all the family; before she had been there a week every one wondered how they had lived before she came, and how they had ever done without her! Her good sense and genuine cordial nature, created a warm comfortable atmosphere through the house, in which every one rejoiced. John had found an intelligent and sympathising com-

panion, able to listen to his plans and to understand his explanations, and who was never weary of listening to him. To John's wife she was a kind and active friend; she loved her for John's sake, and under her influence she brightened up, and became so much more alive, that John thought she was grown more agreeable than he had ever known her. To the spoiled little Marian she was "dear old aunt Alice," who, though she kept a tight hand over her, and insisted upon her being orderly and "learning her book," and took care that she should obey when she was spoken to, was still like a good fairy to her, and made her childish life much happier than it had been under the weak, fretful, worrying rule of her mother, which always resulted in letting her have her own way.

When Alice spoke of leaving them and

settling in a cottage of her own, there was a general outcry; nobody would hear of her leaving: "she must live with them, she belonged to them, and it was quite unnatural in her to wish to go away."

So it was finally settled that "Aunt Alice was to live with them for ever!" as Marian said. Alice indeed had no desire to depart. She loved Marian as if she had been her own child. Her former love for John Withers had deepened and strengthened into a devoted but calm affection. She was willing to be his sister, and none of the neighbours ever doubted but that she really was so. Her early hopes, with their aspirations for earthly happiness, had never been realised; they had withered and fallen around her, but like the dead leaves of autumn which fertilise the earth, her character had been quickened and matured, and raised to a finer quality

than if her scheme for her own happiness had been granted to her.

A thousand precious qualities had been awakened, which might have lain dormant had she been allowed to live at ease, in a lot cast in pleasant places.

Happiness is NOT the most precious gift bestowed upon man. It is NOT the precious metal with which virtue is rewarded. No sorrow "for the present seemeth joyous but grievous;" none of those who have come out of much sorrow, who have tasted its holy influences, but feel reason to rejoice that they have been counted worthy to suffer, and they would not desire to have their discipline one moment abridged.

When Alice had been an inmate of the family about two years, poor Mrs. Withers fell into what country people call "a waste:" she died as gently as she had lived; her last request being that Alice

would never leave her husband and child.

Alice did not leave them; she continued to be the good genius of the house. John Withers found his home comfortable and happy, but he did not suspect all the wealth of affection, — the whole life of love, that had been melted down to produce it.

The little Marian, under her aunt's guidance, grew up a very fine girl. Alice was able to impart only the rudiments of education, but she thoroughly trained and instructed her into valuable household lore, initiating her betimes into the mysteries that fit a woman to become the queen of that arcanum called HOME, in which she must have her root and find her place to dwell.

When Marian was fourteen, John Withers, who, like all persons who have had to

struggle for their own instruction, held education in great esteem, determined that Marian should go for a few years to the best boarding-school that could be found, in order, to use his own words, that she might become "a thoroughly well-informed young woman."

After much inquiry and debate it was at last decided that she should be placed under the care of a certain Mrs. Majoribanks, who kept a school at Chester which was in great repute.

Such is a sketch of the state of affairs up to the time when our story may be properly said to commence. It was necessary to relate it, in order that what follows should be perfectly intelligible, and it may be regarded as a prologue to the play.

CHAPTER IV.

MARIAN'S HOME.

When travelling, it is a great satisfaction to find oneself in a place which has neither been engraved as a "view," nor set down in guide-books as a "beauty." The number of these hidden spots is diminishing every day.

Till within a few years, many spots in Yorkshire and Lancashire were as little known to general travellers as if they had been situate in Cashmere or Bokhara, and even yet they retain a certain shame-faced

look at being discovered by the railway, and placed within the pale of social intercourse with the large neighbouring towns.

At the time when our tale commences there were no railways in existence, except a few "tram" roads, in the vicinity of collieries and iron-works.

The country towns of Burnley, Colne, Clitheroe, Accrington, &c., lay in a country which had not been penetrated to any distance by public conveyances, and individuals journeying across the country were generally obliged to provide their own conveyance, and depend upon their own resources both for going and returning.

About twenty years ago, the traveller leaving Accrington a little to the left would find himself upon a very rugged highway, in a wild country, so surrounded on all sides by a labyrinth of hills, that he would, if a stranger, be apt to wonder how

he came there; followed by the more anxious wonder of how he was to get out again.

These hills are covered to the summit with fields irregularly divided from each other by stone-built fences, which follow the inequalities of the land, and which might have grown up spontaneously from the hills, so little sign is there of the existence of inhabitants who could have built them.

Here and there is to be seen a cottage perched high upon a hill, but no trace of a road to lead to it. The sheep and cattle grazing about seem without owners, and the high-road itself is so rugged and devious, that not more than fifty yards can be seen in advance, except, indeed, a distant view of it wandering along hills apparently out of reach.

The very atmosphere has a peculiar

colour, and the clouds, as they sail along the sky, cast their heavy shadows upon the hills. Waterfalls and rivulets are seen and heard on all sides dropping, clear as crystal, from the broken rocks, which support a layer of fertile soil upon their surface.

The first idea suggested by this scene would be, that everybody else in the world was ignorant of its existence; but a little onward the traveller comes upon a cluster of gray stone cottages, standing along the side of the road, which make a declivity sharp enough to dislocate the wheels of any vehicle. The cottages stand stiff and raw among the old wild hills; children may be seen playing on the door-steps or in the middle of the road; and women, through the open doors, employed in household work: others in short bedgowns over striped woollen pet-

ticoats, with a coloured handkerchief tied over their thick linen caps, and their feet cased in wooden clogs, come along with cans of water on their heads, drawn from the spring that drips from the rock at the wayside,—which proves that the spot has been known and inhabited long before his visit.

A few paces beyond these cottages the road makes another bend; and there, on a level spot of ground, at the foot of a straggling descent, stands a large mill, built of gray stone like the cottages—its tall, slender chimney sending out a volley of black smoke against the pure sky. The stream, which had foamed and dashed so long amongst the hills and rocks around, becomes a placidly-flowing river through the valley where this mill stands. On one side of the mill—but placed a little further back, so as to be completely sheltered by

the rocks—is a small, comfortable-looking dwelling, built of the same kind of stone, and nearly buried in a plantation of evergreens and hardy shrubs, which are sheltered by the rocks from the keen-biting mountain air. The irregularities of the ground in this place give a pleasing effect to the garden, which seems to be laid out in natural terraces.

The labyrinth of wild hills which rises on all sides, opens in one direction, and discloses a large meadow-like track lying beyond, through which—

> The sweet stream doth glide and dance,
> With a motion of sweet sound and radiance,—

until the prospect is closed by a fresh company of hills, which shut out whatever may lie beyond.

This mill belonged to John Withers. His wife had long been dead, and he resided

with his sister in the house near the mill. She still kept her post as mistress of the establishment; although his daughter had left school, and fancied herself a full-fledged woman, — having reached the mature age of eighteen.

The household consisted of John Withers, the father and master; Marian, his daughter; Mrs. Alice, his sister—and one stout, strapping, good-tempered country girl, who was their only servant.

A boy came from the village once or twice a week, to clean the pigsty and cow-house, weed the garden, and do any rough out-of-door work that might be wanted.

One lovely morning, towards the close of the summer of 1825, a mild, pleasant-looking old lady, sat near the parlour window of the house above mentioned. A bright little spider-legged mahogany table

stood before the heavy, old-fashioned easy chair in which she sat. It was covered with a quaint-patterned chintz, and so well stuffed and cushioned with large feather pillows, that her figure was nearly buried amongst them.

As she sat there, marking a dainty pair of white silk-stockings, she looked as if she had been taken out of a Dutch painting —dressed as she was in her black stuff gown, a white handkerchief pinned across her bosom, with the ends confined by a long apron of sprigged muslin; and her own gray hair, braided under a Quaker-fashioned cap as white as snow.

She was not handsome, never had been handsome—neither did she exactly seem to belong to the rank of a gentlewoman; but she had a mild, sensible face, and a homely, benevolent, comfortable aspect, which was extremely prepossessing.

When she came to the end of her marking, she rolled up the stockings and placed them beside a row of similar articles which were lying on the little table before her. Carefully placing her needle and scissors in a red huswife which she took from her pocket, she cried, in a clear ringing voice and strong northern accent,—

"Marian, lass, art thou going to be all day packing up those bits of things? The mill will be loosing directly, and thy father will not thank thee if thou art not ready by he comes in."

"Oh, aunt, dear!" replied a young voice from up-stairs, "do come and help me; the things will not go into this trunk. I don't know what I shall do; I shall never be ready in time."

"Ah, thou art but a helpless body with all thy school learning, I am afraid," said the good woman to herself: but she took

off her spectacles and rose to answer the appeal.

In a small, pleasant bedroom, that looked over the opening in the hills, and commanded a wide and lovely view, "Maid Marian" was on her knees before a tolerably large trunk, which, however, seemed entirely inadequate to contain the multifarious articles which were lying around.

"Oh, aunt, I am so glad you are come; I don't know what to do; father says I can only take one trunk in the sociable. This is the largest I can find, and it will not hold one half."

The old lady paused at the door, partly in dismay, and partly because it was difficult to make an entrance, owing to the numerous articles that strewed the floor, and covered not the floor alone, but every article of furniture in the room.

"Why, lass, what hast thou been about

all morning? There is nothing done. Thy father will be fairly wild if thou art not ready to start in time."

She, however, lost no time in exclamations, but took her niece's place before the unpacked trunk, and bid her hand the articles as she called for them.

"Dost thou think thou wilt want all this gear, Marian?" was her very natural inquiry.

"Why, you see, aunt, it is my first visit, and there is no saying what I may require amongst such fine people."

"Thou art only going for a week, and here thou art taking clothes enough to last a body till the day of judgment. But young lasses have no discretion."

So saying, she remorselessly reduced the articles to one half of those originally destined to be taken; and finally, by dint of skill and patience, the one trunk, packed

and filled to repletion, was triumphantly locked.

"Now," said the old lady, rising from her kneeling position, "I will see how dinner goes on. Put on thy warm cloak, for there is always a great draught in that sociable. I did say there should be a curtain put up, but it has been forgotten; to be sure, it would hinder one from seeing the country. Well, we cannot have everything at once." So saying, the old lady trotted down-stairs, leaving her niece to restore order to her affairs, and to follow at her leisure.

Marian Withers was just eighteen, and this was her first visit from home. It was with some difficulty that her father had been prevailed upon to allow her to accept the invitation of a favourite schoolfellow, who resided at Knutsford with her sister, the wife of a retired merchant. She had

heard from her schoolfellow vivid descriptions of the style in which her sister lived, and Marian had a very reverend notion of the grandeur she was going to witness, and could hardly believe in the reality of so much good fortune falling to her share.

Marian Withers was on the threshold of womanhood. The flower had not yet burst the calyx; all the hopes, fears, capabilities of her nature were yet folded around her like the wings within a chrysalis.

To all appearance she was a pretty natural young thing, very small and childish-looking for her age. Her features were tolerably good, but not remarkable, except when animated; she had large, calm, dreamy-looking gray eyes, which gave token of feelings and capacities not yet awakened; her mouth was very small, but the ex-

pression was so kind and good-tempered, that no one could find fault with it—especially as the teeth it discovered were dazzlingly white and regular—added to this a rich, clear complexion, and a profusion of dark-brown hair, altogether entitled Marian to the claim of being a very pretty girl.

John Withers was proud of his daughter, and he was proud, too, that his child began the world under such different circumstances to what he had done himself. She seemed a high-water mark which showed how much he had risen. He was determined to spare no expense upon her education, and he had sent her to a very expensive school near Liverpool, which fortunately happened to be an excellent one also. Like all men of his class who have raised themselves from the ranks, he set an immense value upon

book learning and cultivated manners; but it was doubtful whether the education bestowed upon Marian might not tend to make her dissatisfied with the society she was likely to be thrown amongst.

John Withers was occupied with his mill, and was always engaged in some invention for the better perfecting of his machinery; every brick and rafter both in house and mill, bore their testimony to the comfort and respectability he had achieved: it was the kingdom he had conquered for himself out of the depths of degradation and misery. For himself he had but one feeling—that of supreme thankfulness and content; he might be worried in business, he might be baffled in his attempts at improvement, he had the ordinary wear and tear of life's vexations, but still there was a proud delight in his possessions which no born inheritor can know. All

the trials and sorrows he had struggled with were of the material kind, and he did not dream of the more refined sufferings to which he was opening the door, by awakening in Marian tastes and aspirations which she was not likely to have the means of gratifying.

John Withers stood well amongst men of his own class. The spinners and mill-owners in the neighbourhood looked upon him as a very shrewd, clever man, who might have been much richer had he been less ingenious. They did not understand John's extravagance in the article of machinery; he was always fitting-up and altering and improving his machines; the improvements eat up a great deal of money, so that John was not nearly so rich as most of his neighbours. Their wives and daughters had very august notions of their own superiority over the meek, unassuming

Aunt Alice, and they kept up little acquaintance with her. However, when Marian came home from school, having finished her education, a great impulse was given to the social habits of the neighbourhood. All the gigs, cars, and sociables, for several miles round, brought their owners to see "what the girl was like, after all the money that had been spent upon her schooling."

The result was, that they did not like

Marian to stay with her. These two houses were like the break in the hills round her father's house; they let in light and air, and prevented her from being stifled by the close pressure of things and people with whom she had no sympathy, and who on their side looked upon her with contempt.

In the mean time she followed her own pursuits, kept up her French and Italian, practised her drawing, and tried her skill in making sketches of the surrounding scenery; read every book she could lay her hands upon, and endeavoured to shut herself up in a world of her own:

> "She sat at fancy's door,
> Calling shapes and shadows to her."

But with all this she dearly loved her Aunt Alice,—who did not seem in the least vulgar, though she never read anything

but her Bible, and knew no amusement greater than to tend her bees, and to sit with her knitting on a fine day in the porch, which looked into the garden,—and who, moreover, was constantly sighing over Marian's dislike to useful occupation. Marian reverenced her father, though she did not understand him, and though he was always, when in the house, so engaged in poring over his models and books of mechanics, that he took but little notice of her; so Marian was very much left to herself, which, considering her character, was about the best thing that could befall her.

Whilst at school she had formed a strict friendship with a Miss Hilda Blair. Since leaving school the two young ladies had kept up a lively correspondence, and as it was long before the days of penny postage, there was much murmuring on

the part of Aunt Alice at such an unprofitable expenditure of money.

"Here, Marian," said her father one day at breakfast, as he turned over his own letters, "here is another letter for thee! How can you two young lasses have so much to say to each other?"

"Why, what ails the lassie?" said Aunt Alice; "she is as red as that flower-pot all of a sudden. Is there bad news?"

"No, aunt, only a surprise. It is a letter from Hilda, and one enclosed from Hilda's sister, Mrs. Thomas Arl, inviting me to go and spend a fortnight with them; see how kindly she writes to me."

Aunt Alice set down the teapot, and putting on her spectacles, began to read the glossy perfumed missive.

"Nay, child, I can make nothing of such fly-legged writing; give it to thy father."

With some trepidation Marian handed it to her father, who read it through, whilst Marian sat watching his countenance with great anxiety; she longed to explain—she felt the incongruity between her father and the fine lady, and she longed to make his judgment of her favourable.

"Well, it all sounds very well; and you think she is quite hearty in her invitation?"

"Oh, yes, father; Hilda says——"

"Ay, well; let me see her letter too."

Poor Marian did as she was desired; but she would have given worlds to sober down the wild, racketing style in which her friend expressed herself, and which, till that moment, had been a delight to her.

"She seems a little giddy thing, this Miss Hilda. Pray is this the precious nonsense for which I pay so many sevenpences? I have often wondered what it was that could be worth so much writing and so much

postage. But she seems to be very fond of you, if words mean anything. And who is her sister?"

"I have heard Hilda say she married a foreign merchant, who had made a large fortune. I think he is Dutch or German."

"Well, they are very kind. I suppose they are respectable people?"

"I think, from what Hilda told me, they must be very grand people indeed. I should like to go very much."

"I dare say you would. Well, put up thy letter, and we will see about it."

John Withers had very old-fashioned notions about taking care of his daughter. He set his face against the whole tribe of young men, and watched as jealously as a Turk that nothing in the shape of a lover came near Marian; no unmarried man was ever allowed to set foot inside the house; but, as Marian thought that all the young

men she had ever seen were vulgar and detestable, no difference of opinion had as yet arisen between her father and herself upon this delicate question. However, it required much coaxing from Marian, and all the influence of Aunt Alice, who had been gained over, and who thought that "the lassie should have a little pleasure; for that she had no companions, and would be fairly moped to death if she lived always with old folks."

But the strongest point was the assurance that Hilda had no brother. At length he consented that Marian should go for a week; and Marian scarcely ate or slept for the six days previous, in the pleasing anxiety of preparation.

When, however, she stood in her room, —all the preparations for her departure completed,—her heart felt strangely depressed, and with the usual inconsistency

of human nature, she half wished that something would happen to delay her journey. She felt sorry to leave her father and her Aunt Alice, and the idea of going amongst strangers was oppressive. She stood irresolutely before her glass, slowly putting on her shawl, when her misgivings were dispersed by the clear ringing voice of her aunt, calling her down to dinner.

She hastily took up her bonnet, and descended to the parlour, where her father had already seated himself at table.

"Come, lass!" said he, looking up from the fowl he was carving; "sit thee down, and make a good dinner; thou'lt want it before thy journey's end."

"I am not hungry," said Marian.

"Don't be full of fashions, but eat thy dinner when it is set before thee."

"Thou wilt never live if thou dost not eat," added her father. "And when dost

thou come back from amongst these grand people?"

"The day you fixed yourself, father, this day week. But I shall write before then, and tell you how I go on."

"Well, do not let them talk you over to stay longer; I shall miss you sadly. And mind you are not giddy, and that you do not talk too much. Young women often expose themselves to remarks; they talk of what runs in their head, without thinking of what they say. Is Miss Blair a well-informed young woman? Have you conversed with her upon history and geography?"

"No," said Marian, laughing.

"I do like to see young women well informed. I have given you a good education, and I should like thee to be able to take part in rational and instructive conversation."

"Well, father," said Marian, if ever the conversation should turn on history and geography, I will try not to disgrace your kindness in sending me to a good school."

"Now do be discreet," continued her father, "and do not let any young fellow turn your head with his nonsense. I suppose Mrs. Arl is very particular whom she allows to converse with her sister. Be guided by her. Young women cannot be too modest and reserved in their manners. I wish thou wert well home again."

"Marian will have to take care of herself through life," said her aunt, "so the sooner she begins the better. She will not always have her father or me at her side, and she must learn to find out what is right for herself. If we do not see her, there is One above who does: and if she lives as in His sight, she will never go far wrong."

"Listen to thy aunt, girl," said John

Withers. "I cannot talk like her, but I mean well. And now, God bless thee; tell me what money thou wilt want after thy journey is paid. If thou hast five pounds in thy pocket, I think thou wilt hardly spend more."

As he was speaking he drew forth a large black leather pocket-book, and after turning over various papers, he took out a clean new Bank of England five pound-note.

"Thou wilt not need to change it before thy journey's end. Here is some loose silver, to pay for anything by the way."

At this moment an anomalous-looking vehicle was driven jingling up to the door. It was something in dignity between a covered cart and a family sociable. The springs were old and stiff, but as the seats were well cushioned with pillows filled with Aunt Marian's best goose feathers, the jolts

from the unpaved roads were not so serious as they might have been.

Aunt Alice now bustled into the room, arrayed in her best black silk bonnet and shawl, and holding in her hand a substantial wicker reticule.

John Withers assisted the stout servant maid to bring down Marian's trunk, which was with some difficulty secured beside the driver; and all three took their seats inside. They were to sleep at Manchester that night, and Marian was to start the next morning in the stage-coach that ran through Knutsford, where Mrs. Arl had promised to send the carriage to meet her.

The next morning, when they went to the coach-office, two inside passengers were already seated. They were an old gentleman and his wife, who had come early to secure their choice of places.

The gentleman, a little, thin, bustling man, with a bald powdered head, was in the midst of an animated exhortation to his dear Mrs. C. not to open the window upon her side of the coach, when the appearance of Marian with her father and aunt caused a diversion of his activity. He insisted upon her trying every place in succession, to see which she liked the best; he seconded her aunt's anxieties that she should be well wrapped up, and joined her in insisting that Marian should take the black silk bag which her aunt had filled with sandwiches, and a little black bottle of wine-and-water, the neck of which peeped up through the strings.

At length the packages were all stowed on the roof, the coachman mounted his box, the guard blew the horn, the ostler withdrew the cloths from the horses, and the coach dashed off.

John Withers and Aunt Alice remained looking after the coach until it was out of sight, and then departed, Aunt Alice to go through the day's shopping she had so long meditated, and John Withers to go a long round amongst the warehouses, it being market day.

CHAPTER V.

CARRISFORD MANOR.

When the stage-coach stopped at Knutsford, a footman, in a dashing livery of white and blue, was waiting to inquire for Miss Withers. He conducted her to an open carriage which stood at a short distance, in which was seated a young and elegant woman, dressed perhaps rather too conspicuously for good taste, but presenting to Marian's eyes an *ensemble* of magnificence which was quite dazzling.

The lady, who was no other than Mrs.

Thomas Arl herself, received Marian with much graciousness, though she was rather startled at the very homely appearance her visitor presented. To be sure, a long journey in a stage-coach is apt to derange the most careful toilet; but Mrs. Thomas Arl's quick eye discovered at a glance that Marian's bonnet, and mantle, and dress, although of good materials, were of very provincial fashion, and she wondered what kind of society her young guest frequented.

"I came into town for a morning's shopping," said she, as she made room for Marian beside her, "and hearing that the coach was expected immediately, I waited for you. It will be a charming surprise to my sister, who does not expect you until evening."

The footman and the guard of the stage-coach were endeavouring, with some difficulty, to raise Marian's heavy trunk to

a place on the box, beside the coachman, who was furious at the indignity, and made his horses prance with his own impatience.

"You see, ma'am," said he, turning and touching his hat to Mrs. Arl, "this carriage ain't made for luggage, and the horses don't like it. The cart will be coming up at night, if miss can do without her box till then."

Marian blushed, and felt very uncomfortable at the trouble so many fine people were taking on her account. Her assurances that she could wait quite well for her trunk, were interrupted by the shrill, cracked voice of the old gentleman in the coach, who was leaning half out of the window, holding in his hand the bag of sandwiches, with the bottle of wine-and-water, not more than half concealed. A crowd of idlers stood around, attracted as much by Mrs. Thomas Arl's brilliant

equipage as to see the stage-coach change horses, and a youth, in shirt-sleeves and ragged hat, offered himself as the bearer. Mrs. Arl was giving directions about the cart, and did not at first perceive him, as he stood officiously bowing and holding up the bag, which Marian thought had never looked so ugly.

"Is that yours?" said Mrs. Arl, with a slight accent of surprise.

"Yes," said Marian, feeling very much ashamed; "but the poor boy had better keep it for himself."

"Then there is nothing more to wait for; — drive home, Maurice," said Mrs. Thomas Arl, flinging herself back in the carriage with an air of disgust.

"There is always such a crowd at these places," said she, "that one feels *encanaillé*, even though one is in a carriage."

"Are there many hands out of work here?" asked Marian.

"I really am not aware," replied the lady, with a shade of superciliousness in her manner.

The conversation during the drive consisted chiefly of inquiries, upon Mrs. Arl's part, as to the families who resided in the neighbourhood of Burn Brook, who they were, and in what style they lived, &c.; to which Marian replied in all simplicity, and told Mrs. Arl how badly off she should be for acquaintances if it were not for the vicar and his sister. As tradespeople and farmers did not, in Mrs. Arl's opinion, come within the pale of civilization, she listened with something like dismay to Marian's account of the set of people she lived amongst, and was vexed to think that she should have invited to come and stay in her house a young person who

was not in society at all, and who had no "select acquaintance" whatever. She was, however, somewhat comforted to find that the vicar was nephew to the Earl of B——, and that his cousin, old Lady Barbara, had once been on an authentic visit to the vicarage, when Marian was staying there, and had wished to take her to spend the winter in Bath, which her father, honest John Withers, had peremptorily negatived, saying that it did girls no good to visit out of their station in life. Hearing this somewhat raised Marian in the eyes of Mrs. Thomas Arl, and was a precedent she could quote in case of need. She expatiated with great eloquence on the advantage of young women being seen in good society, and exhorted Marian not to refuse such an invitation if it were offered to her again.

"You see, Miss Withers, in these days

every one can get rich, so that 'family' is the only distinction left. There is something almost vulgar in being too rich; but it is no matter how poor people are if their family be good; they can never lose their place in society, they will always be select, and their acquaintance a credit."

This doctrine, put forth in an oracular manner, came with the force of perfect novelty to Marian, who had never been taught the advantage of either riches or "family," and she felt as if she were about to enter Mrs. Arl's house under false pretences, seeing that she could boast of neither. An instinct of candour inclined her to enlighten Mrs. Arl, but she did not know how to begin.

"Have you any sisters, Miss Withers?" asked Mrs. Arl, carelessly, more for want of something to say than from curiosity;

but Marian considered it an opening upon which she was bound to speak.

"I have no relations at all except Aunt Alice, who lives with us, and a far-away uncle of my mother's, who lives in Scotland, and whom I never saw. I have heard my father say he was a poor boy, and never knew either his father or mother, and that a good lady took him and my aunt out of the streets and put them to school. He got on in the world for himself."

"Now, I like you for being so honest!" cried Mrs. Thomas Arl, in a more natural tone than she had hitherto spoken. She seemed to have been surprised for the moment out of her artificialness; but the leaven of her nature showed itself again directly.

"Besides, your father is a man of genius, which is always a credit, and in its way it is almost like being of a good family—it is something *distingué*."

Poor Marian felt that her hold on Mrs. Arl's good-will was very fragile. She was pained to be thrown back upon herself, for she felt that all she possessed was of no estimation in the eyes of that lady. This did not arise from mortified vanity, but from an intense craving for sympathy. Mrs. Arl was the most attractive and beautiful creature Marian had ever beheld; she seemed to belong to some superior order of beings, and Marian felt herself cut off from access to her by Mrs. Arl's predilection for birth and family. It never struck her that Mrs. Arl was vain and worldly, she only felt her own deficiencies. Whilst she was pondering, the carriage crossed the drawbridge and entered the old gateway of Carrisford Manor, the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Arl.

The house consisted of three sides of a quadrangle, and had been originally built

about the reign of Henry VII., but much had been added since at various periods, and the architecture of the additions had not always been in keeping with the original type; but to the uninstructed eye, it had an imposing and venerable appearance, whilst its discrepancies were veiled by the luxuriant growth of rich ivy, which had climbed up as high as the quaint twisted chimneys. The mansion stood on a rising ground, in the midst of an extensive park, well filled with stately trees, some of which seemed as old as the mansion. A wide space around the house had been laid out as a garden, with terraces, and esplanades of fruit-trees; but at a certain distance from the house the garden had been allowed to merge into the park, which from contrast had all the aspect of an unexplored and picturesque wilderness. Separated from the garden by a narrow ravine, which was

thickly planted on each side with shrubs and underwood, lay the kitchen garden, and beyond that were the farm-offices and homesteads.

The heavy iron-studded door before which the carriage stopped opened into a covered court, at the opposite end of which a trellis gate allowed a delicious glimpse of the garden beyond, and of a delicate fountain playing in the midst. Marian would gladly have stood for a moment to admire the effect of the rich sunshine playing upon the trees, and glancing off upon the sparkling fountain; but she was obliged to follow the steps of the stately butler, who ushered them up a few steps through an arched and pillared entrance into a large hall, panelled with black oak; the windows were in deep embrasures, and hung with rich crimson curtains. Along the walls and in the recesses were ranged heavy oaken tables and

quaintly-carved chairs. Against the walls hung several portraits, in the old Flemish costume; they were portraits of some of Mr. Arl's ancestors; he was of Flemish extraction. A large mantelpiece reached nearly to the ceiling, and on the hearth below it were arranged blocks of wood for a fire. The floor was covered with a rich Turkey carpet.

"Hilda is in the drawing-room," said Mrs. Arl; "she does not know you are here, or she would have been out to meet us."

As she spoke she opened a door at one end of the hall. A beautiful girl, with her hair hanging in clusters of grape-like curls, was so engrossed with a difficult lesson she was practising upon the harp, that she was for an instant unaware of their entrance; looking up, however, she overset the music-stand in her haste, and, springing to Marian, welcomed her with a heartiness which was

much needed by poor Marian to reassure her of her right to find herself amongst such imposing environments.

The luncheon was announced before the first greetings had subsided.

"You shall take off your things after luncheon, and then we can go up-stairs and have a long talk, and we need not be interrupted until dinner. I have much to say to you, and I am so glad you are come. I was afraid something would happen to hinder your journey."

A carriage full of visitors to Mrs. Arl released the young ladies before luncheon was over.

"Come along," cried Hilda, "I am impatient to have you all to myself. I don't know which is to be your room, but we will go to mine, and you shall lie down on the sofa, in my dressing-room, and rest yourself whilst we talk."

Hilda bolted the door of her pretty little dressing-room to prevent intrusion, and obliging Marian to lie down upon the settee, which was placed before the open casement, she seated herself upon a cushion on the floor beside her.

When two young girls who are on confidential terms find themselves together, after an absence, the outflowings of their communications are not of the most coherent nature.

"Why, Hilda! how came you never to tell me what a beautiful place you lived at? How happy you must be!"

"The place is well enough, especially to those who see it for the first time; but as for being happy, I don't believe there ever was any one more miserable than I am just now. I want your advice so much, for there is not a soul here to whom I can speak, and I know I may trust you."

"To be sure you may, dear Hilda, and I will do anything in the world to comfort you."

"Thank you, dear—I have wished for you so often—you will tell me what to do."

"About what?"

"Well, it is a great secret, and if Nancy knew I told you of it, I don't know what she would say."

"But I shall not tell her, so now what is it?"

"Well, you must know that there is a gentleman who lives in this neighbourhood, a most disagreeable creature, but very rich; he is a first-rate match, and he lives in a beautiful place, which has belonged to his family for generations—a real family seat. Arl only rents this place, it does not really belong to him, and I know the country-people laugh at Nancy for the pains she takes to be thought one of them. Did you

see how she ran away from luncheon? That was because a family called whose acquaintance she wants; she has done everything to get intimate with them, but they never came near her till this morning, and now I will wager it is only to make her do something for them. Now if I were to marry this Mr. Glynton, I should have a far higher standing than these people with all their airs."

"And this Mr. Glynton has made you an offer: what is he like?" asked Marian.

"No: the offer has not come yet; but I can see it coming. He will dine here to-day, and I cannot make up my mind what to do. He is not so old as he is infirm and trembling. He used to be a great *roué*, but now he is in bad health, and has grown as precise and proper as possible,—shocked to death at the least thing a girl does. I have

made him believe that I am the most unsophisticated, natural little creature in the world; and I always wear a white muslin dress, with a single moss rose, and no ornaments at all, when he is to be here; because he likes all sorts of pretty shepherdess fashions; and I once told him, when we were talking of books, that I admired Mrs. Hannah More's 'Search after Happiness,' although it was so old-fashioned, and I showed him the copy which I got as a prize at school. He insisted upon borrowing it, and actually took it away with him. I guess he would not find me so amusing as he does if I read nothing better than that! But I would not for the world let him know that ever I read a line of Byron, or had looked into any French novel in my life, except 'Telemachus.' I actually gave him a dissertation upon it one day! I know it is Arl who has put it into his head to want to

marry me; and to think it would be a good move for him."

"But if you dislike him, why do you try to please him?" asked Marian.

"Oh! one is lead on. When I found that I could make him believe anything I chose, I could not help trying; besides, it is no disgrace to a girl to have a man of his importance doing the civil to her. Arl and Nancy are always preaching to me that I must make a good match. Nancy is always saying that love fancies pass away, whilst good standing in society, and marrying into a good family, are advantages that last for life. I always believed it; but it is much more disagreeable to marry a man one detests than I thought it would be, whilst I was not certain I should have the offer. I know that he has spoken to Arl about me, and I know that he is coming here to-day to commit himself to me.

Nancy was lecturing me this morning how I was to behave, and what I was to say; and she was quite cross with me when I said I did not like him, and that if he ever handed me a cup of tea I could not bear to drink it, because he had touched the saucer; and once, at breakfast, he cut a slice of bread from the loaf, and I had such a disgust I could not eat it, but made an excuse to take something else. Nancy understands nothing of that kind; she only scolded me, and said that I had given him so much encouragement that it would be an insult to him, and a disgrace to myself, if I were to refuse him after all."

"Well, but what is it that I can do for you?" said Marian.

"I really do not know what you or any one else can do for me," replied Hilda; "but it is a great comfort to talk to you, and you can sympathise with me, for you can

understand me, and will not think me very wicked."

"But if you dislike him so much, I don't think you ought to marry him. You will have to live with him for life, and that is a long time to look forwards."

"So it is; but if I were to refuse him, there are a dozen girls who would jump at such an offer, and I should not like to see any of them put over my head."

A tap at the door, followed by an attempt to enter, was heard at this moment.

"That is Nancy," said Hilda, in a whisper, as she rose to unbolt the door. "Do not let her suspect that I have told you anything. Perhaps she will tell you herself."

"What! not begun to dress yet!" said Mrs. Arl, as she entered. "Did you not hear the first dinner-bell? Fawcett shall

come to dress your hair, Hilda, whilst I show Miss Withers to her room."

"I do not know whether you are romantic, Miss Withers," said Mrs. Arl, as they passed along the gallery. "Is your taste ancient or modern? Here is a little French bedroom and dressing-room ready for you, if you like it." As she spoke, she opened the door of a charming little apartment, fitted up with a tasteful simplicity, and overlooking a cheerful view of the garden.

"I once thought of putting you here, but if you have a 'Castle of Otranto' taste, you would perhaps prefer the next room; it is more grand and gloomy, but the windows are placed so high from the ground that you will have to climb on a chair to look at the prospect."

"It is a charming room," said Marian; "and I prefer it to the other since you

are so kind as to give me a choice. It is the sort of place I have often dreamed about, but I never saw it realised before."

"Very well, then, I will ring for your trunk to be brought here, and you shall be formally installed in possession of it. But I ought to warn you that there is a secret panel in the wall, which was once a hiding-place for unfortunate cavaliers and persecuted priests; whilst in that corner there is a concealed door, which formerly led to a winding staircase, but that is now blocked up. I have an unromantic dread of robbers, and I do not wish to afford them any facilities."

"The room is still picturesque enough to satisfy all one's idea of a Gothic chamber, in spite of its looking so comfortable," said Marian.

It was a large and lofty room, with

a curiously carved and painted ceiling. The walls were hung with tapestry; one side of the room represented the meeting of Jacob and Esau. The furniture consisted of curiously carved Dutch cabinets, and old quaint-looking ebony chairs. The bedstead, which was also elaborately carved, was hung with heavy green camlet curtains. The brightly polished oak floor was partly covered with a carpet of needlework, a trophy of female industry in a past generation. Over the lofty mantel-piece was a portrait which riveted Marian's gaze. It was a half-length figure of a powerfully-formed man, dressed in the German burgher costume of the fifteenth century. The countenance had a strange look of fanatical inspiration, cruelty, and insanity.

"That is a portrait of one of Mr. Arl's family, a noted Anabaptist, who suffered

martyrdom, or execution, whichever you like to call it, after enduring the most horrible torture. I look sometimes at that portrait till I get quite frightened at my own fancies. But come, you must explore afterwards; you have not more than five minutes left to dress, and Mr. Arl is always vexed if dinner is not ready to an instant."

This recalled Marian to her own personal perplexities which she had forgotten. She wished Mrs. Arl would tell her what to wear, but she did not dare to take the liberty of asking her. As Mrs. Arl was leaving the room she turned round and said,—

"We are not expecting a party to-day; there will be only ourselves and Mr. Glynton, a very agreeable man. Perhaps my cousin may come, and Arl may bring some one home with him; but that is

very uncertain, so there will be no need for you to dress much."

This left Marian almost as much perplexed as before. She did not know the difference between much and little as regarded dress. She lifted, one after another, all her dresses out of the trunk, and laid them on the bed; they looked very different from those worn by Mrs. Arl and her sister. There was no time for deliberation. She must perform her toilet as rapidly as possible, if she would not keep Mrs. Arl waiting for dinner; with the fear of this before her, she at last selected a light blue silk dress, which, as being the least ambitious in its pretensions, was likely to have the fewest sins of shape and make.

She was just dressed when Mrs. Arl and Hilda came to take her down-stairs. They were both beautiful women. Hilda, in her white India muslin, and the single

moss rose in her bosom, looked the very personation of youthful freshness, and contrasted well with the more full-blown and majestic beauty of her sister.

"You look very nice, Marian," said Hilda; "only do not put on that great bow of ribbon, which is not worn now."

"That dress is a pretty colour, and suits your complexion," said Mrs. Arl good-naturedly. Somewhat reassured by this assertion, Marian went with them into the drawing-room. They only found there Mr. Arl and Mr. Glynton.

Mr. Thomas Arl received Marian very kindly, and told her he hoped she was come to make a long stay with them. He was a little, dry, whimsical-looking man, with an air of shrewdness and kindness in his face, which was not exactly ugly, but decidedly odd. He spoke English well, but with a foreign accent. Mr. Glynton

was a tall emaciated man, between forty and fifty years of age. His face was rather handsome than otherwise, but it bore a slight trace of paralysis on one side, which had also partially deprived one hand of motion. He had a grave, composed, gentlemanly bearing, and was dressed with great care and good taste. When she saw him, Marian rather wondered that Hilda should feel such an antipathy to him.

"Where is Albert?" asked Mrs. Arl.

"Your cousin had a better engagement; he said he would come in the evening, but I do not believe he will, because he said so;" replied Mr. Arl, with a strong accent on every word. Mrs. Arl shrugged her shoulders and looked annoyed. "One can never depend upon him for anything," said she.

Dinner was announced at that instant; Mr. Thomas Arl gave his arm to Marian,

and Mr. Glynton followed with the other ladies.

"How do you like my friend?" whispered Hilda, on their way to the dining-room.

"She is a nice healthy-looking country-girl, but decidedly provincial and *endimanchée*; one sees that she has never been in society. Simplicity is very charming, no doubt; but it requires high breeding and cultivation to give it the perfume of good society." He concluded this, with an approving glance at Hilda, which was intended to mark her especial right to what he had uttered as a general assertion. Alas for the vanity of poor human nature! Hilda really loved Marian, and did not care a straw for Mr. Glynton, and yet she felt gratified at his compliment although paid at the expense of her friend.

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. THOMAS ARL.

DINNER passed over less formidably than Marian had feared. Mr. Glynton was extremely polite to Mrs. Arl's guest, and did all that was incumbent upon his sense of what was due to himself—for he piqued himself on being an extremely well-bred man, and thoroughly versed in all the etiquette of polite society. Mr. Thomas Arl was too busy wrestling with the difficulties of carving a saddle of mutton to talk much. Carving was an art in which he was

by no means a master, and it was a sad drawback upon the comfort of his dinner.

Instead of adjourning to the drawing-room after dessert, Mrs. Arl proposed a walk in the garden. She wished to give Mr. Glynton an opportunity of speaking to Hilda. Mr. Arl walked beside Marian, and after ascertaining that she did not dislike smoking, he took her into favour as a very nice, sensible girl, who had nothing nonsensical or fastidious about her. Marian felt more at home with him than with his wife: he was less unlike the people she had been accustomed to; but she could not help wondering how two persons so different in every way should have married each other. Arl was shrewd and sensible, although his wife and many other people thought him dreadfully heavy and prosing. Marian listened with a certain edification to his details of a public meeting he had at-

tended that morning, and to all the bearings of the question under discussion upon the manufacturing interest. It was long since he had met with such an exemplary listener, and as she showed no symptom of weariness, he indulged her with a summary of the debates as reported in that day's paper, and all the principal items of intelligence, foreign and domestic. Indeed, poor Marian, in her simplicity, thought he was very kind to take the trouble of talking to her.

Mrs. Arl sauntered listlessly beside them, sometimes humming an air from an opera, and occasionally stopping, as if to examine a flower, but, in reality, to cast a glance on Mr. Glynton and her sister.

At length they all met in a walk which was terminated by a thick hedge of yew, which had been trimmed into a series of arches, opening upon the park. Daylight

was fast declining, and Mrs. Arl declaring it to be very chilly, they all returned to the house.

The drawing-room had been lighted up during their absence, and as they entered, a tall, elegant-looking young man rose from a sofa where he had been lounging, and lazily looking over a volume of music.

"Ah, you faithless Albert, why did you not come to dinner? Miss Withers, my cousin, Mr. Albert Gordon."

Mr. Albert Gordon made the necessary acknowledgment, and then said,—

"I came here without having had any dinner at all, if that be an atonement, and Maurice gave me some scraps, which he seemed to consider far more than I deserved—but where have you been all this time? I have been here this half-hour and was just falling asleep."

During this colloquy, Marian had leisure

to observe the new-comer. She had often heard Hilda speak admiringly of their Cousin Albert, "who was the most charming creature in the world, only too poor to marry." He was very tall, and well formed, with a profusion of rich brown hair, and remarkably fine eyes. He was dressed with great elegance, and his manners were gentle and prepossessing. Both Hilda and Mrs. Arl seemed to be proud of their cousin. Tea was brought in, after which Mr. Arl installed himself at a small table, with a German newspaper and a candle, and soon fell asleep—his customary mode of spending the evening. Mrs. Arl opened the piano, and the rest gathered round her.

"I fear you will find this rather stupid work, Miss Withers, but we are practising some of the songs in 'Don Giovanni,' because we have a notion of getting up

an opera at Christmas, with the assistance of some of our friends. We shall need a great deal of practice, which will not be very amusing to you."

Marian, of course, declared that nothing would give her more pleasure than to be allowed to listen, and they began their performance without further preliminary.

Marian had never learned music,—she had never heard anything better than the psalm-singing of a country church; so that if any one had asked her if she loved music, she could not have told them that her faculty for music, and many other things, was still unawakened.

She was tranquilly sitting at a table, looking at a book of engravings, when the first notes came upon her ear. She sat in a trance, feeling as if a stream of life was being poured into her; the intense enjoyment almost amounted to pain, her

whole being seemed fused and permeated by celestial fire; it was as if a spirit had entered into her, and taken possession of her whole being, and carried her out of herself into a world where *sound* was the only reality. Her senses were quickened, and filled to overflowing with delight; they seemed too limited to grasp or to receive the flood of new sensation let in upon them. After awhile, she lost all consciousness of herself, and became, as it were, transfused into the unutterable element of lovely sounds that surrounded her. It was like madness, or like being possessed by a demon; she sat crouched into a corner of the sofa, her face buried in the cushions, and the tears streaming from her eyes, until the spell was broken by the announcement that "Mr. Glynton's carriage was come," and then she escaped from the room, to recover her composure and to

avoid observation whilst the bustle of departure was taking place.

"Where has Miss Withers gone?" asked Mrs. Arl, looking round a few moments afterwards.

"I dare say she was tired, and found that your music made her head ache," said Mr. Arl, awakening. "Music is very good; but you give one nothing else. Miss Withers was wise to run away."

Marian re-entered at that moment. She had quite subdued her emotion, and felt a shy jealousy, lest anyone should perceive how much she felt. It was to her a sacred mystery which she would have felt pained to reveal.

"You are looking quite pale and wearied," said Mrs. Arl. "We are all, except Mr. Arl, so mad after music, that I fancy we bore our friends dreadfully."

Marian stammered something in reply;

she hardly knew what she wished to say. Mrs. Arl, who was dying to know what had passed between her sister and Mr. Glynton, did not particularly trouble herself to listen. She supposed that Marian was fatigued, would wish to retire, and offered to go with her to her room. In fact, she did not wish any conversation to pass between her sister and Marian, until she had ascertained how matters really stood; nor until she had bespoken Marian's influence to her own side. Sitting down in an arm-chair, whilst Marian made preparations for curling her hair, she said,—

"I have one thing to say to you, Miss Withers, for I do not consider you as a stranger, having heard so much of you from my sister. You have great influence over her; and if she should chance to talk to you of Mr. Glynton, do not run him

down, nor make fun of his wig, stooping figure, or bad voice. He is a man of very good family; and he has a great regard for Hilda, and I do not wish her to be laughed out of him. He is very superior to all the men about here; and whenever Lord Arundel has visitors, he always invites Mr. Glynton to stay with him. When the Duke of Cumberland was down last year, Mr. Glynton and he grew quite intimate. He pays great attention to Hilda; and though of all things I hate marrying girls, who are always on the look-out for an establishment, yet I do not want Hilda to insult him. If Hilda were to marry him she would go to court, and live half the year in London. She is a dear, romantic creature, and has no idea of self-interest; so if she talks of Mr. Glynton, I hope you will put in a word of common sense; she will take it better from you

than from me. But I am chattering here, whilst you must be dead with fatigue. Good-night. We are in the next room, but I trust that no 'grimly ghost' will disturb you."

Mrs. Arl left the room, leaving Marian in wondering perplexity how a woman who had just been uttering sounds that might

"Raise a mortal to the skies,"

could be guilty of such poor, worldly, sordid ways of thinking. But she was overpowered by fatigue, so that all feelings were merged into intense weariness,—and almost before the sound of Mrs. Arl's footsteps had died away, she had extinguished her candle, and was fast asleep.

When Mrs. Arl found her husband and cousin, they were in the smoking-room, enveloped in a dense cloud of smoke.

"Where is Hilda?" she asked.

"She said that her head ached, and she went to bed as soon as you left us. A woman's head does not ache for nothing; what is the matter?" said Albert.

"I am sure I do not know; perhaps Mr. Glynton has proposed to her. I hope she would not be so silly as to refuse him."

"Well," said Albert, knocking the ashes from his cigar, "I must say that you women are not stopped by trifles. It is small encouragement to a man to be steady, and self-denying, and all that, when a scamp like Glynton, who has ruined his constitution by all kinds of dissipation, can marry a nice, pretty, fresh young creature like Hilda, for the asking. I suppose women do not realise what their so-called 'dissipation' means. It is a nice decent term, but it covers a multitude of sins. I do not like the notion of my pretty cousin

Hilda marrying that old sinner. I wish I were rich enough to marry her myself."

"I beg Albert, that you will put no foolish notions into Hilda's head. Whatever he may have been, Mr. Glynton is quite steady now, and he has the strictest notions of what women ought to be. He is more easily scandalised than any man I know."

"Very likely," replied her cousin, drily; "men like him see further into things than you do."

"Well, what do you think of our visitor, Miss Withers?"

"Oh, she is a nice little thing if she had more style; but she has no manner; and then her nose is too small, and her hair is not the colour I like; and she has a large mouth. But I dare say she will improve in your society."

"And I tell you," said Arl, impatiently, "that she is worth all the ladies you bring

into this house; she has what I call a heart. She is a nice girl, if you do not go to spoil her with your notions."

"And she listens to your long stories," said Mrs. Arl, laughing. "But it is very late; so, good-night,—I shall grow jealous of Miss Withers."

"No, you will not," said Arl; "she is not handsome as you are; she does not play; she does not sing; she will not be noticed except by me, and for that you do not care."

He made a grotesque face, and flung away the end of his cigar as he spoke; but his wife did not hear him, for she had left the room.

Mrs. Arl was not a heartless woman; she had in reality a very fine nature, though it was at that time little better than a desolate island, which grew up in luxuriant beauty,

"A paradise of wildernesses,"

where fruits and flowers, and singing-birds and serpents, flourished in tropical luxuriance.

She was the daughter of a Scotch Presbyterian minister, himself a descendant from the stern old Covenanters. He had married a lady descended from a family of French Huguenots, who had taken refuge in England from the persecutions in the south of France. He and his wife both held high Calvinistic views, and though they differed upon minor points of metaphysical theology, they both were agreed on the necessity of strict discipline and severe chastisement, to train their children in the way they should go. The result was signally unsuccessful, and the parents bewailed their own weakness in having permitted their children to become "a snare to them," and they acquiesced in the result as a merciful

punishment to recall them to a sense of their idolatry.

They certainly had not erred on the side of mildness or indulgence. Only two of their children lived beyond the age of childhood. Nancy and her sister Hilda were very beautiful children, but for fear of awakening worldly ideas and fostering vanity, they were made to believe themselves disagreeably ugly. Nancy had a fine ear for music, and from a child showed a passionate love for it, as well as a desire for information beyond her years. At first it had been determined, in conformity with some religious theory, that they should learn nothing that was not directly religious in its tendency, and all historical reading, with its mythological and classical allusions, was prohibited at a sweep; dancing, of course, came under the same condemnation; geography was taught with limita-

tions; drawing was only slightly encouraged, as "an amusement too trifling to fill up the time of an immortal creature." When people begin to be scrupulous, they go on becoming more and more sensitive, —there is no saying to what point of strict necessity the education of these girls might have been reduced, had not the perversity of human nature for once played the part of a virtue. The confinement and monotony of home was not broken by any childish dissipation, and Nancy, a high-spirited girl, early formed the idea of learning a great deal, that she might be able to go out as a governess, and get away from home. She petitioned to learn with as much earnestness as other children petition to have a holiday; and, albeit dreadfully afraid of conforming to the fashion of the world, Mrs. Blair allowed herself to be persuaded to entreat her husband to allow

masters for music and French, on the plea that if they lost their father, they might be able to gain their own livelihood. This motive was kept constantly before them, and the one scheme of happiness these girls indulged, when they were "building castles in the air," was, that they might, perhaps, sometime keep a school, when they would give a ball, and go to the play!

Mrs. Blair was not without a mother's pride in the acquirements and beauty of her children, but she chastened it from a sense of duty, and abstained from any commendation which might lead them to think there was anything remarkable in what they did; indeed, her own efforts went decidedly towards depressing every sentiment of self-esteem. But her well-intentioned efforts were destined to defeat. The wife of Mr. Blair's brother, in Bengal, was ordered to England on account of deli-

cate health, and her husband wrote to beg his brother to receive her until she had determined on her plans.

The letter announcing this important intelligence arrived on the morning when Nancy attained her sixteenth birthday. Refusal was impossible, as the lady had already arrived in England, and only awaited a reply to her letter to proceed at once. Mr. Blair was annoyed. He had heard that his brother had married a gay, worldly woman, and from such kind of acquaintances he had always kept aloof.

Mrs. Blair was put out of the way because she had a great wash about, and she had intended to take down the spare bed.

Hilda and Betsy were enchanted, and they talked between themselves of nothing but their aunt, wondering what she would be like.

At length Mrs. Fergus Blair arrived,—a handsome, stylish, worldly woman. She looked with profound contempt upon the dulness and homeliness of her brother-in-law's house, and with ill-disguised impatience on the opinions she heard expressed. The beauty and accomplishments of her nieces pleased her, and she began to indulge in matrimonial schemes on their behalf; for Mrs. Fergus Blair loved match-making, and was an invaluable chaperon.

Her first step was to gain the confidence of her nieces, which was no difficult task; and before she had been twenty-four hours in the house, they had told her all their secrets, and laid themselves more open to her than they had ever done to their mother. Their scheme of keeping a school, that they might be free to give a ball and go to a play, made their aunt laugh heartily.

"My dear girls, where have you lived to get such notions as these? With your beauty and accomplishments, Nancy, you ought to marry a man of at least five thousand a year. You are quite worth that, or even more. You are monstrously handsome now, and in a few years, when you are more developed, you will be a perfect beauty."

"Oh, aunt, you are laughing at me; mamma says I am very ugly."

Mrs. Fergus Blair coughed down the remark that rose to her lips, and only said,—

"That must have been some years since; growing girls are often very plain, but you and Hilda are both pretty, and you must take advantage of it, for your father has no fortune to give you."

She then painted the realities of school-keeping life and governessing, with every

circumstance of aggravation, concluding her description by asserting that marriage was the only honourable provision for a young woman destitute of fortune.

These conversations often repeated, made a profound impression upon Nancy. She had never been allowed to hear a syllable about love. She was ignorant that there was such a passion, and consequently her aunt's doctrine of marriage seemed perfectly natural and reasonable.

Mrs. Fergus Blair was eloquent in her descriptions of the gaieties of the world, of the theatre, the operas, the balls, the regattas, the public breakfasts, in all of which she had gained, by her own accounts, signal triumphs. Her nieces were never weary of hearing her describe her dresses and her partners, and the compliments she had received. It opened a new and glittering world to the secluded girls. The

deep disgust that had long been smouldering in their hearts for all that surrounded them at home broke out into a flame, and Nancy seriously assured her aunt that, "unless she very speedily received an offer, she should run away, and go to sing upon the stage."

Mrs. Fergus Blair was rather startled at the effect of her teaching, and turned the tide of her eloquence to preaching the beauty of "having a good standing in society," of being of a "good family," and above all the duty of being "very select in her acquaintances."

All the girlish elasticity of Nancy's life had departed. A wild thirst for admiration, a sickening desire to go out into the brilliant world her aunt painted, accompanied by the fear that she would never be anything more than a governess, nearly drove her to a nervous fever. She wept inces-

santly, neglected her employments, and became so irritable and unlike herself, that her mother became seriously alarmed for her health, although her father attributed it entirely to sinfulness, and suggested a "severe course of discipline, to bring her to a proper frame of mind."

The poor girl had, however, fretted herself ill, and the physician who was called in ordered change of air without delay. Mrs. Fergus Blair, who was very weary of her brother-in-law's gloomy house, petitioned that she might take her niece with her to Cheltenham,—and with great difficulty, prevailed.

"I will never come back to that house," said the young lady, looking back upon it from the carriage window. "No, never; I will sing in the streets first."

Arrived at Cheltenham, neither the novelty nor the gaiety of the scene diverted

her attention from the steadfast design she had formed to marry somebody rich—no matter whether he were old or young, so that she might marry, and escape returning home.

Her beauty made a great sensation, as her aunt had foreseen.

A dry little man, who walked into the pump-room one morning, attracted her notice, and she inquired who he was. He proved to be a certain Mr. Thomas Arl, a rich Dutch merchant, who had recently come over from Batavia. He was said to be very rich, very eccentric, and a confirmed old bachelor.

Nancy did not wish to marry a fool, and there was something in the dry whimsical look of this little man that took her fancy. She perceived that he had remarked her, and she determined that he should be her matrimonial prize.

The alleged difficulty gave an interest to her scheme which it would have otherwise lacked. She took no one into her confidence, not even her aunt. She knew well what she was about. Mr. Thomas Arl was presented to her aunt, and was charmed with the simple artlessness of her beautiful niece, who seemed utterly unconscious of her own attractions. He petitioned to be admitted to Mrs. Fergus Blair's whist-table; and although he seldom spoke, yet in the intervals of the deals and rubbers, he looked very earnestly at the beautiful girl, who seemed intent upon her embroidery, seldom raising her eyes, and never speaking to any of the young men buzzing about her.

One day he ventured to rally her upon her silence, and a demure reply that she preferred older people who could converse rationally, was all the encouragement she ventured upon.

Mr. Thomas Arl pondered upon it for the space of a long rubber: he recollected that she always listened to him when he spoke, and he played a wrong card in the emotion this thought caused. His partner, Mrs. Fergus Blair, was consoled for the last odd trick, by receiving that very evening a proposal in due form for the "hand of her lovely and accomplished niece."

"Yes, aunt, of course I will marry him," said Nancy, when her aunt, full of the exciting intelligence, burst into the room, her joy somewhat tempered by the fear that her niece might find him "a little too old."

"You are a dear sensible child," said her aunt, kissing her; "you have the sense of a widow of thirty."

"I told you I would not go home again; and I think Mr. Thomas Arl will suit me very well; so say everything that is proper for me."

Nancy took on herself the charge of informing her parents, and she so adroitly mixed up the account of his Netherland ancestors, who were put to death by the Duke of Alva for being Protestants, with statements of his riches and his goodness, that, wisely or foolishly, Mr. Blair suffered his consent to be obtained; and in a month after the offer had been made, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Arl were on their way to Paris.

At the time when Marian went to Carrisford, Mrs. Arl had been married somewhere about four years. She had no family; they had travelled abroad a good deal during the two years that followed her marriage; after which, she had managed to persuade her husband to take Carrisford Manor,—which was to be let with all its right of shooting and fishing, for a term of years,—and began her attempts to make her way in the world

as a "county person;" the highest object of her ambition. Mr. Arl's resolute refusal to retire from business threw some obstacle in her way; but then, as she remarked, he was a foreign merchant, and connected with the Indian trade, which made it quite different to the vulgar manufacturing concerns of print-works and factories. Her extreme anxiety to be in good society rather defeated its own end; one or two neighbouring families, indeed, called upon her, and kept up a distant acquaintance; but her pedantry of etiquette, her display in dress and equipage, together with her affectation of contempt for everything and everybody who was not, to use her own phrase, "highly select," made them inclined to resent her altogether as an impertinent intrusion: whilst her undeniable beauty and accomplishments, of course, only aggravated the offence. There was a general understand-

ing amongst the magnates of the neighbourhood that Mrs. Arl was to be kept at a distance. Mr. Arl being a foreigner, who neither rode, nor hunted, nor preserved his game, who was not a magistrate, and who cared nothing for the parish politics of the neighbourhood, could not, of course, be of much assistance to her in her endeavours after country life. He was moreover highly liberal, not to say radical, in his political tendencies, which was of itself sufficient to keep a family of far more sterling pretensions out of the pale of neighbourhood.

However, when Mrs. Thomas Arl looked back upon the many substantial advantages she had achieved for herself, unaided by either friends or fortune, she was not disposed to repine. She "bided her time;" but was quite resolved to conquer a position for herself before she had done. In the meanwhile, she made the best of what

she had; she made her house very pleasant; Arl knew many distinguished men abroad, who were constantly giving letters of introduction for him to such of their friends as might be visiting the north of England, and Mrs. Arl contrived to give an air of continental gaiety to her dinners and dances. By degree she gathered a certain society round her, which, without being the very best, was still very respectable, and she spared no pains to improve it. The first use she had made of her improved position in the world, was to send Hilda to an excellent school, for the benefit of masters. This school chanced to be the one that had also received Marian; hence the train of accidents which led to Marian's visit to Carrisford. When Mrs. Arl returned to England, and settled at Carrisford, Mrs. Fergus Blair, who, as the original source of her niece's good fortune, indulged in the

wildest visions of human gratitude, and expected, at the very least, that she should enjoy free quarters at Carrisford, in the very best bedroom the house contained, and be an honoured and cherished adviser to her niece for the rest of her days, was doomed to signal disappointment.

Mrs. Fergus Blair, albeit a woman of unimpeachable reputation, was a dear lover of racketting and gaiety, delighted to be surrounded with young men, to get up public breakfasts and pic-nics, and sociable dances, and round games of cards, with a comfortable supper afterwards. The daughter of an officer, and the wife of an officer, she was accustomed to life in a regiment, and her ideas of what Mrs. Thomas Arl should do were very different from that lady's intentions, and she consequently showed a determination to follow her own opinion in all things. In the first place, she made her aunt under-

stand that Carrisford was not to be her home, that she was only to come when she was invited, and only to remain for a moderate period; also that she was not to invite any company of her own. Free and open-handed as Mrs. Fergus Blair appeared, she loved to receive presents and to save her own money; and in neither of these particulars did her niece indulge her. There was no end to the list of Mrs. Fergus Blair's grievances, nor to "Mrs. Arl's shameful neglect and ingratitude." Matters resulted at last in a formal rupture, the offended lady declaring that she would never set foot in Carrisford again—a decision which much rejoiced her niece, who took care to give her no temptation to break it, although she extended an olive-branch, in the shape of a handsome new year's gift. There had been a stately reconciliation between both parties; but the

breach had never thoroughly healed, and Mrs. Fergus Blair's conversation was somewhat tinged with a shade of misanthropy as she dilated at her whist-parties at Cheltenham over her motherly affection for her nieces and the heartlessness of the world. Mrs. Arl's parents had both died whilst she was abroad, so that Hilda naturally came to live with her sister, and the old people were spared the spectacle of their children's declension into the snares of the world, which could not fail to have distressed them.

CHAPTER VII.

MARIAN AT CARRISFORD.

The next morning Marian awoke, bewildered and confused. She could not remember where she was; it seemed at least a year since she had quitted home. She rose as soon as summoned, and was dressed and in the breakfast-room before any other member of the family had appeared. It was a lovely morning, and as she was looking wistfully into the shrubbery on which the window opened, watching the sunshine as it came glancing through the leaves, and

speculating whether there would be time for a walk before breakfast, Mrs. Arl's cousin entered the room. Marian did not perceive him until he stood beside her, and she felt herself start and blush as if she had been caught in some questionable deed.

"Something told me that I should find you here," said Albert, with an expressive look. "Will you not come into the garden? Nancy and Hilda will not be down for the next hour. I wish you would teach them your good habit of early rising; although," added he, lowering his voice, "I shall not wish them to begin to practise it whilst you are with us. This good fortune of finding you alone is too precious to be lost! In that simple morning-dress you look like one of the ladies out of the 'Decameron,' or like her whom Chaucer thought of when he wrote—

'Up rose the sun, and up rose Emilie.'"

At first poor Marian was too confused to listen. She scarcely knew whether she had done right in accepting his invitation, and wondered whether Mrs. Arl would think it strange that she should walk out with her cousin before any one else was stirring. But Albert had a frank and gentle kindness of manner, which soon made her feel at ease, whilst the fresh morning air, and the lovely views of the openings in the park beyond, and the sweet smell of the flower-beds near them, were so delightful, that she soon forgot all misgivings.

Albert contrived to make her break the silence she at first preserved, and as her embarrassment subsided she began to talk easily and naturally of the scenery around her own home, and Albert exhibited the most adroit interest about everything that concerned her. He made her tell him

about her aunt Alice, about her father's mill, about what she did when she was at home —looking down upon her, as they walked along with his large dark eyes, that seemed at times as if they gave light.

"Hearing your voice, Miss Withers, is like listening to music. I wish you would talk nonsense, because then I should not be divided between the pleasure of listening to a lovely sound and the desire to attend to what you say, which is well worth hearing for its own sake. I fear we must have bored you last night with our music."

"Oh, no, no!" replied Marian, eagerly; "I never heard such music before; it was like going to heaven, and I seemed to be endowed with a new sense."

She looked so pretty as she spoke, blushing at her own warmth, that Albert gave her a most expressive glance, and said, in a low tone, "Let me sing to you again; I

shall set some value on my singing if it pleases you; but you must talk to me in return."

"Is not that a bell ringing?" asked Marian, abruptly.

"Ah! yes, the breakfast bell. They are ringing it to summon us. But let it ring on a few minutes; this is the only happy hour I shall have during the day; do not let us return just yet."

Although he spoke in a very pleading tone, Marian was resolute to go back immediately.

"I had no idea we had wandered so far from the house," said she.

Albert did not reply, but he half smiled; at that moment a footman, who had been in search of them, came up to say that Mrs. Arl was waiting breakfast for them.

Marian was thinking what she should say

to excuse her delay, and felt uncomfortable lest Mrs. Arl should be displeased; but when they entered, Mrs. Arl was busy pouring out the coffee, and examining at the same time the outside of a letter which lay beside her. Mr. Arl was opening his letters and newspapers, and all were too much engaged to ask questions. Marian glided to a chair, and wished she could have hidden herself under the table. As breakfast went on, she heard confused sounds of conversation, but she only caught indistinct words.

"How charmingly penitent you look," said a voice in her ear. She started. Albert had left his place at the breakfast table, and seated himself on the sofa behind her chair.

"Do you think your cousin waited breakfast for us long."

"Not a bit of it; so do not distress your-

self. To tell you the truth, I am too much interested that you should find favour in her eyes to let you get into any scrape with her. I want you to like each other, and then you will stay with us a long time."

He said this so gently and so kindly, that Marian felt quite grateful to him. But Mr. Arl had finished breakfast, and was preparing to depart. His gig had been already summoned.

"I shall think all day of our walk this

When the gentlemen had departed, conversation between the ladies flagged. Hilda looked cross and annoyed, and Mrs. Arl seemed to Marian to be very cold and distant: both she and her sister were evidently under some restraint. Marian feared she had offended them, and began to be very uncomfortable and to feel not at home. She withdrew as soon as possible to her own room to write a letter to Aunt Alice, and amused her with a description of the very different style of life she had fallen into. When she read it over to herself, it seemed as if she had been describing a fairy tale, it sounded so charming; and yet she had never felt so lonely and uncomfortable. She had no friend to give her counsel or explain the meaning of the new things and people around her. She was left to make her own way, and she feared at every step to go

wrong. She felt, more than ever she had done before, the value of that home affection to which we may cling with all our weight of weakness, without fear that it will either fail us or grow weary of us. Just as she was sealing her letter, Hilda entered the room.

"I fear," said she, "you must have thought us very rude to you; but Nancy wanted to talk to me, and she has been telling me something that has made me just mad."

"What is it at all?" said Marian, anxiously.

"You know all I told you about Mr. Glynton yesterday, and how sure I was that he was coming to make an offer. Well, he said nothing absolutely to the point; but whilst we were in the garden he said everything that could make me think he intended it, and I felt quite

sure that all was right. This morning Nancy has heard that he is to dine to-day at the Vivian's, and is to join their party to the English lakes. Any one of the Vivian girls would jump that high to get a rich husband like him, and they have laid themselves out for him in the most disgraceful manner, and now they will be sure to get him. I don't care for the man — never did; but the idea that paying me so much attention should prove to be nothing but a blind to the world,—and to have one of those chits of girls put over my head,—it is enough to make me mad. If it had been a real lover—one I cared about—it would not have been half so bad." Here the fair Hilda, quite overcome with vexation, burst into tears, without paying any attention to Marian's attempts to console her. She was still weeping, when Mrs.

Arl joined them. She gave a quick and annoyed glance at Marian.

"Come, my dear Hilda, it will never do to give way in this manner. It is very vexing, certainly, but something may change; and, of all things, it will be bad for you to get your name up as that of a worldly-marrying girl, looking out for an establishment. The Arundels will be calling this morning, and if they see that you have been crying, there is nothing too malicious for them to say. That Mrs. Arundel, with all her motherly looks, is an arrant gossip, and makes more mischief than all the rest of the neighbourhood put together. Come, dry up your tears, and make yourself fit to be seen. Miss Withers, this is sad, stupid work for you. You said yesterday that you would like to go through the house; let us come now, and after luncheon we

will have a drive. It is a sin to stay in the house this lovely morning."

Saying this, she took Marian's arm within her own, and they proceeded together on their tour of inspection.

All women have a natural passion for seeing the domestic interior of other people's houses. A love of housekeeping is inherent in them; and handsome side-boards, tables, and chairs, are the true Lares and Penates of all women, gentle and simple.

Mrs. Arl's house was richly furnished, and with the most appropriate taste; for she was an artist in all her instincts, and this saved her nature from becoming altogether hardened into worldliness. Her establishment was excellently appointed; she considered it to be one mark of a "good family" that the household should move along with a certain stately and efficient regularity.

Marian who had an instinctive love of elegance which had never been satisfied, and was besides remarkably impressionable to external influences, felt a sense of delight and well-being she had never before experienced. She seemed for the first time to breathe in her natural element. The library particularly struck her. It was a long and rather low room, with books along each side, preserved by gilt wire lattices. The floor was of polished oak. The windows were casements in deep embrasures, shaded with ivy and creepers, which only admitted a dim and tempered daylight. There was a raised dais at the end of the apartment, and this was furnished as a reading room, and separated from the library part by a rich *portière*, worked in a bold Gothic pattern of scarlet, purple, and gold. The floor was covered by a Turkey carpet,

and furnished with the most comfortable lounging chairs, sofas, and ottomans, in every shape that could tempt idleness. The ceiling was lofty and emblazoned with various coats of arms, in their proper heraldic colours. The window descended to the ground, and opened on a heavy stone balcony, which commanded a view of the green glades and forest trees of the wildest part of the park; whilst, on one side, an opening allowing a glimpse of the country beyond — fields dotted with sheep and cattle, with hills in the distance.

"This is the most charming spot in the whole house!" cried Marian. "You must enjoy having such beautiful things around you."

"Yes," said Mrs. Arl, flinging herself into a chair; "there is some temptation to marry when a woman obtains a good

position and a handsome establishment. Hilda would be better off than I am if she were to marry Mr. Glynton, and I am rather glad to see she is beginning to open her eyes to the advantages of such a matter. To tell the truth, I invented a little this morning when I told her that he was going to join the Vivians in their journey to the lakes. He is dining there to-day, and I know they will do their best to persuade him to go. She seemed so very apathetic, that I thought a little jealousy would be no bad thing, to make her less indifferent to such an excellent prospect. I know Hilda well: there is nothing like opposition to make her desire a thing."

"But," said Marian, "Hilda told me that she disliked Mr. Glynton, because he was a *roué*, and so much older than herself."

"Young girls do not know whom they

like nor whom they dislike. If we were to stop and inquire into the private life of all the men who are introduced to us, and only admit those who are not dissipated, we might as well go into a nunnery at once. All men are wild, or have the privilege of being so, before they marry and settle down; it does not hurt their character. But the less young girls inquire about the previous history of the men they marry, the more comfortable they will be. Believe me, dear Miss Withers, who am a married woman, men are all alike, and it does not do to inquire about their private history, to say nothing of the indelicacy of it. Hilda has no business to know that Mr. Glynton has been a *roué*."

"But," persisted Marian, "she says she does not like him. And although she might accept him because she would not let him fall to one of the Miss Vivians, that

does not seem enough to make her happy for life with him."

"At the end of six months a woman will scarcely recollect whether she married for fancy or not. If the man treats you kindly, you grow to feel towards him like a relation; one looks on him as a sort of uncle. My dear girl, if you had lived the hard and miserable childhood I did myself, you would know the blessing of substantial comforts, and not lose the chance of them to dream of romantic ideals, about which girls change their minds three times a month. Girls have no sense; they always are more taken with flashy vagabonds than with respectable men!"

Marian did not know what to think of this philosophy; she only said—"I always thought it was very wicked to marry a man without loving him."

"I live very happily with Mr. Arl,

though he does not look like a man out of a novel. As a girl, I used to have fancies, indeed I remember thinking how charming it would be to marry a man with a fine voice, who would sing duets out of 'Don Giovanni' with me all day long. If I had insisted on my ideal, I might have been teaching music now—have been going about to beg for pupils, and left to stand in the passage whilst the servant went to take my message into the parlour."

"That is not a tempting prospect," said Marian; "and yet" ——

But whilst she hesitated, the footman announced that the carriage had been brought round. Hilda declined accompanying them, on the plea of not feeling disposed.

Seated in an elegant little pony carriage, drawn by two dainty ponies, that might have been the gift of Cinderella's godmother,

and driven along at a rapid pace, Marian speedily lost the painful impression produced by the conversation of the morning, and indeed began to think that Mrs. Arl had some reason on her side. Mrs. Arl drove, and Marian admired the grace with which she managed the reins. A groom on horseback followed the carriage at a short distance. They proceeded down a country lane that turned off from the high road, and which lead between luxuriant hedge-rows and tall trees that arched over head. Mrs. Arl did not seem inclined to converse, and Marian did not feel sufficiently intimate to make the attempt. As they were proceeding up a somewhat steep ascent, they were met by Mr. Glynton, who reined in his horse at their appearance.

"You have a lovely day for your drive; but I do not see your fair sister."

"No," replied Mrs. Arl, carelessly, "Hilda complained of a headach, and remained at home, to keep quiet. Mr. Arl is to bring some gentlemen to dinner, one of them a most interesting Italian, Count somebody; I wish you would come and join us."

"I thank you, I shall be happy—that is, I fear I am engaged; but—perhaps—I wish you a very pleasant drive."

And he rode off very abruptly for so scrupulously polite a man. A peculiar smile passed over Mrs. Arl's face.

"How do you think Mr. Glynton looks on horseback?" asked she after a pause.

Marian hesitated.

"Ah! I see—never mind speaking," said she, laughing; "words are great superfluities. I shall have to invest a great number of them, nevertheless, before I achieve your conversion from romance to

common sense. You are the most tempting person for a convert I ever met with. You do not contradict me, you scarcely reply, and seem just on the point of listening to reason, when one discovers that, with all your gentleness and seeming humility, you have not yielded up one jot of your own private judgment; and that, in order not to make an absolute loss of all the wisdom that has been expended, one must begin over again. Look at that fine place on your right hand, situated on a rising ground, with the lake and the swans, and the avenue up to the house,—that is Mr. Glynton's family seat. What do you say to it?"

"That it is very well worth looking at."

On their return they were met at the gate by Hilda, who was watching for them. She did not speak until they were in the house, when she clapped her hands, and jumping on a footstool, exclaimed—

"Glynton has been, and I guess he will not go the lakes along with the Vivians! and I guess he will make an excuse to get away from the dinner in good time! and will they not be wasting their precious civilities! and will not Miss Vivian be a model in her dress and conversation for all the young women of England! and much good it will do her. How I should like to be invisible, and see all that passes at this grand dinner! Would it not be fun!"

Hilda clapped her hands again, and looked as bewitchingly malicious as a young kitten. In the excitement of circumventing the supposed designs of Miss Vivian, she forgot her own dislike to Mr. Glynton.

"I suspected how it would be," said Mrs. Arl, "when we met him this morning, and I made the drive longer on purpose to give you time. Well, dear Hilda, I congratulate you with all my heart. We

drove past his house. It is looking lovely just now. What a magnificent place you will have. It would have been aggravating if one of those prim, proper, Vivian girls had got it."

Marian, feeling that the two sisters would wish to be alone, kissed her friend affectionately, and went to her own room. She had never in her life received any formal instructions on the moralities of love and marriage, and what she was seeing and hearing bid fair to perplex her natural instinct on the matter. There was a candour and frankness about Mrs. Arl which prevented her worldly notions seeming shocking and heartless; indeed, there was such a friendly confidential air in her way of giving them utterance, that Marian had quite begun to like Mrs. Arl, and to desire that Mrs. Arl should like her. In the meantime the idea of seeing Albert again

at dinner was sufficient to make her feel perfectly happy and satisfied with her condition. She was persuaded that Albert did not hold his cousin's views, and that he had a great deal of feeling, which indeed was the reason he was such an agreeable and charming young man. She then began to meditate upon what she should wear, and at last decided on a clear white muslin dress and a blue girdle. Whether it arose from feeling more at home, or whether she had caught an inspiration from Mrs. Arl and her sister, it is certain that she had, to a degree, lost that indescribable air, which, without being positively or tangibly vulgar, still betrayed that she had been accustomed to a less cultivated and refined society.

At first she did not perceive Albert, for, with true coquettish instinct, he had designedly placed himself where he could

watch the cloud that covered her countenance, exactly as he expected it would, when she did not see him. He admired the attitude in which she sat down, and enjoyed the total want of interest she displayed to everything but the opening of the door, as the rest of the party entered.

At length dinner was announced, and, before she knew when he had come, or where he had come from, Albert was beside her chair to offer her his arm. A less vain man might have been flattered by the frank beam of pleasure that lighted up her countenance like sunshine. "I have been watching you ever since you entered! —how lovely you look!"—he whispered. Marian's cheek was suffused with a deeper glow; she had never experienced such a thrill of delight.

The gentlemen were not long in rejoin-

ing the ladies in the drawing-room. Albert never left Marian's side, except to sing, and she felt that the full, rich tones of his voice were addressed to her.

When Marian retired to her room that night, she had fairly entered upon the enchanted land of passion, which looks glowing and paradisaical, like those clouds of sunset which seem to serve as gates to a yet more glorious heaven beyond, but which, alas! thicken into mist and darkness before they lead again to the light of day.

During the whole of Marian's visit, Albert was unremitting in his attentions to her. He was a young man of too much experience not to perceive that Marian was falling in love with him; but then he was accustomed to such accidents. The perfect modesty and unconsciousness in the unreserve with which she surrendered her fresh young heart to the influence of his fascinations pleased and

amused him. It was quite delightful to him to watch the development of her feelings, and he neglected nothing that might secure his conquest. There being no other visitor to distract his attention, he was constantly by Marian's side, and his looks, his conversation, and his singing were all addressed to her.

Although he certainly never in so many words made a distinct avowal of his attachment, it is not much to be wondered at if Marian did not, like all well-behaved young heroines, wait for such a declaration before she fell unreservedly in love with him herself.

Mrs. Arl and Hilda were too much engrossed to pay much attention to her; they were glad Albert took the trouble of amusing her off their hands, as they did not dare to invite any company for fear of frightening him. So Marian was allowed to dream in peace.

Mr. Arl once said to his wife,

"I think your cousin is paying too much attention to Miss Withers, who does not know how little he means by all his fine speeches."

"Nonsense! Mr. Arl. Miss Withers has plenty of sense, and surely she has been taught that whatever attention a young man may pay her, it means nothing, unless he makes her a distinct offer; and of course Albert has no intention of doing that. Besides, I do not think she has much feeling—at least his attentions have taken no effect yet."

"I think you are mistaken," replied Mr. Arl; "I shall be glad for her own sake when she goes home. Poor girl, she has too much heart; your cousin does not deserve her."

Mrs. Arl shrugged her shoulders, and opened the piano.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RETURN.

THE period originally fixed for Marian's stay at Carrisford was drawing to a close, and the idea of returning home intruded on her thoughts like the skull at Egyptian banquets.

It was on Friday morning, and Marian had hastened her dressing, in the hope of enjoying a few moment's conversation with Albert before the rest of the family made their appearance. Without any direct understanding, it always

happened that Albert and Marian found themselves alone together in the breakfast parlour every morning. These moments Albert declared were the happiest in his life. Marian said nothing, but they were glimpses of fairy happiness like nothing but similar experiences in the life of every woman. On this identical morning, Albert was the first in the room. When Marian descended, the footman had not finished laying the table. There was opportunity only for a look of eloquent reproach from Albert, which Marian received with a feeling of delightful remorse. As soon as the servant, who seemed as if he never would have arranged the cups and spoons to his satisfaction, had departed, Albert sprang to her side and tenderly took her hand.

"Why would you rob me of one second of the brief happiness of being alone with

you? Ah, if you knew how coarse and joyless is my life, and how the remembrance of these precious moments hangs like a silver lamp on the threshold of each day, you would not lessen their duration."

Marian did not reply, but leaned her head upon the chimneypiece, and her rich glossy curls hung down like vine tendrils, and prevented her meeting the look which gave emphasis to the speech. After gazing upon her for a moment, he said,

"You have, without exception, the loveliest complexion and the most graceful bend of the neck I ever saw in a woman! How beautifully you hold your head!"

His compliment to her complexion was at that moment hardly warranted, for Marian's face and neck were suffused with a deep blush. She was glad to know that Albert admired her appearance, but she felt ashamed of having her person thus

commended. To change the conversation, she said, though with a somewhat unsteady voice,

"I was going to ask you to do me a service, but I fear the commissions of ladies are rather troublesome."

"Dear Marian, I would do anything in the world for you."

"Well, then," said she, gently withdrawing the hand he had taken, and shrinking a step closer to the chimney-piece, "Mrs. Arl settled that I was to wear my new purple silk dress at dinner to-day; but I have no girdle, and I thought that perhaps if you went near any shops, you would get me one—it is not a difficult colour to match."

"I feel very grateful to you for the commission. I shall feel jealous of the ribbon, but it will put me *en rapport* with you. Do you believe in mesmerism, Marian?"

"I do not know that I ever thought of it," said she.

"You have a magnetic hold on me, and have placed me in enchanted bondage," whispered he, turning away as Mrs. Arl entered the room.

"Since when have you had this passion for early rising, Albert? It is quite a new virtue for you."

"Perhaps I am changed in many ways," he replied, with a half glance at Marian.

Mrs. Arl looked wondering at him for a second, and slightly shrugging her shoulders, proceeded to perform the duties of the table. Nothing remarkable passed during breakfast, except that Mr. Arl was rather in haste, as he and Albert had to go to Manchester, and the gig was ordered to be brought immediately.

There was the usual bustle which gen-

tlemen make when they have to set off anywhere; but, after the door was shut, Albert suddenly returned. Mrs. Arl was going out as he entered, to give some last message to her husband.

"Did I take the pattern of that silk, Miss Withers?" he said in a hurried manner; and then, without waiting for her reply, he seized both her hands and kissed them. "I could not bear to leave you with all those people standing by; my last look of you must be alone."

He was gone before Marian could look round, or rather before she could discern anything for the dizzy rush of emotion which overpowered her.

Hilda called her into the drawing-room to help her to arrange some flowers and prepare the room for the evening, and Mrs. Arl sat down to practise her songs.

"My dear Miss Withers," said Mrs. Arl,

suddenly turning round, "it is quite out of the question for you to go home at the time you fixed. We are going to have a large dinner party next week, and you must stay for it. All the people who take part in the opera will be here, and we shall have a grand rehearsal. There will be several persons I should like you to see. Albert quite counts upon your being here."

Marian's heart sank at the idea of going away, but she knew her father would be seriously displeased if she did not keep her word, so she said resolutely,

"You are very good. I don't know what I shall do when I go home; but I fear my father—"

"You are not to fear about anything. You may lay the fault on me, and say that I kept you by force, for go you shall not. I will tell you what we will do,—there

is plenty of time to write by to-day's post, and I will write a petition to your father and to Aunt Alice, and you shall write a letter to explain that it is absolutely necessary you should remain for the party."

"And, dear Marian," said Hilda, "you forget that we are to have an excursion to Mr. Glynton's place, and a gipsy dinner in the park; you must stay for that—I shall not enjoy it at all without you. I will sign Nancy's letter, and add the prettiest postscript in the world, and then your father cannot be angry; besides, what can he want you for so particularly by a certain day?"

"Besides," said Mrs. Arl sententiously, "it will be a great advantage for you to mix in good society. Some county people will be here to dinner. You are shut up at home and see no one, and you are a girl to get on in society, which, after

all, is the great thing in life; every other advantage follows in its train."

Mrs. Arl rose from the piano, and sat down to write at once to Mr. Withers. Marian continued to arrange the stand of flowers, hardly knowing whether she had done right or wrong in letting herself be persuaded to ask for an extension of leave.

The prospect of being seen in good society did not strike her as of the importance with which Mrs. Arl regarded it; but she thought of Albert, and then it seemed impossible she should ever be able to go away.

She continued to argue with her conscience, and to give it the most unanswerable reasons for yielding, but somehow these reasons never satisfied the objecting self within her.

"There," cried Mrs. Arl, looking up

triumphantly from her desk, "read this letter, and then see whether any father or Aunt Alice in the world could be displeased with you after receiving it!"

Marian had scarcely read three lines, when the butler announced, with some embarrassment of manner, that "a person named Wilcox was in the breakfast room, who wished to see Miss Withers."

"What can have brought him!" cried Marian, anxiously. "Something must be wrong at home."

"Let us go and see," said Mrs. Arl.

When they entered, they saw a stout, middle-aged, hard-featured man, in knee breeches and worsted stockings, who stood, with his hands in his pockets, looking out of the window. He had taken off a rough white driving coat, which lay on a chair near, whilst a somewhat greasy hat stood upon the elegant table, with the corner

of a red and yellow handkerchief hanging out of it.

"Your servant, ma'am," said he, turning round as they entered. "Well, Marian, lass, and how art thou?" He stretched forth a black horny-looking hand to her as he spoke. Marian on her part was ready to sink into the earth with shame and embarrassment, that Mrs. Arl, who had just been saying so much about the duty of keeping good company, should be intruded upon in her own house by a stranger, who in appearance and demeanour was far below her footmen. However, she had too much good feeling to pain Mr. Wilcox by seeming ashamed of him. She presented him to Mrs. Arl as a friend of her father's, adding, by way of an extenuating circumstance, that he had a large mill near their house, and was their nearest neighbour.

Mrs. Arl, although she was in an agony

lest a perverse fate should send some "county person" to call upon her at this especial moment, was good-natured enough to say, that she was glad to see any friend of Miss Withers.

"You are very kind, I am sure; though I am hardly in trim to see company, being just as I go to the mill. You see it is rough and ready with us. I would have put on my best coat, if I had been let to have my own way; but my missus had packed it in the portmanty, and being rather badly this morning, I did not like to insist; for, as I say, women being the weaker vessels, we must let them have their way betimes if we would not have them broken," and Mr. Wilcox laughed, by way of commentary on his *bon mot*.

Marian inquired anxiously after her father and Aunt Alice.

"They were well and hearty when I

left them two days since. My missus and I were coming into this neighbourhood for a little pleasuring, and likewise to christen our Tom's last child, and your father asked me if I would call here and take you up on our road home. He said your time would be up within a trifle, and he would feel more easy to have you with somebody to take care of you. He nowise likes young lasses to travel by themselves."

"But," said Mrs. Arl, "we had just prevailed upon Miss Withers to ask permission to extend her stay with us, and we were writing to Mr. Withers when you came in."

"Ay, but she mun go tho'. My orders were express to listen to no persuasion to the contrary. I shall tell him how good you were to wish it, and I don't doubt but that the lass is sorry to go hersel', which is but natural; so go and put up

your things, and be sharp about it, for the coach goes at three, and it is now long past twelve, and the missus is waiting for us at the inn. I shall never hear the last on it if we are late. Let me see, I have a bit of a note for thee somewhere: I had like to have forgotten it, but the sight of such a face as yours (said he, looking at Mrs. Arl) might make a man forget more things than a letter."

As he spoke, he extracted from his breast pocket a large black leathern pocket-book, from which he took out a small note, written on blue ruled paper, as if it had been torn from a ledger, and gave it to Marian.

"I must indeed leave you," said she, after reading it; "my father will admit of no excuse. He seems to have guessed the temptations I should meet with, for he is very peremptory in his summons."

"Then, of course, I can press you no further," said Mrs. Arl, coldly; "but will not Mr. Wilcox have some refreshment after his drive?"

"Well, since you are so good, I will say nothing against a crust of bread and cheese, in regard to that I breakfasted early; but surely I had better go somewhere else for it. My missus will never hear of meals in her best parlour, only tea-drinking."

Mrs. Arl of course overruled this. She rang the bell to order luncheon, and then followed Marian out of the room.

"What a strange sort of a man, my dear! Do you think it is quite safe for you to travel with him?—one of the servants shall go to the coach with you."

"Mr. Wilcox looks rather rough, and is out of place in this house; but he is a very good man, and I have known him as long as I can recollect anything. He has the

largest mill anywhere about us, and his 'hands' are the best done to; he is always contriving to do them good and make them comfortable."

"That is all very well," replied Mrs. Arl, "but he is not a fit person for you to associate with. You must keep all those sort of people at a distance."

Marian shook her head, and said, as well as she could for the tears that choked her, "I shall see nobody whom I can like after leaving here."

Mrs. Arl felt very sorry for Marian, and though Mr. Wilcox was as odious as ever, still she felt her disgust mitigated by hearing that he was a person of substance.

Hilda now came in, saying, "Where have you been. I have been looking for you all over the house; and what is this about Marian? Why is she packing up so suddenly?"

"Mr. Withers wished her to have the escort of a friend of his."

"Ah," said Hilda, "I had nearly forgotten; that person who is having lunch in the breakfast-room has asked for some brandy; he does not like the hock, and Willis says there is none out, and that you have the keys of the cellar."

This was an additional mortification to poor Marian, for she knew that Mrs. Arl hated men who drank spirits at all, and the enormity of asking for brandy in the morning was an aggravation she could never expect to be forgiven. She felt as if she were leaving the house under an accumulation of disgrace. She began desperately to wish herself away before Albert should return to see what must disgust him for ever.

"Well, Marian," said Hilda, "you *are* a good girl. How well and patiently you

bear all this. But, never mind; you must come again soon, and when I am married you must be my bridesmaid, and come and stay with me for months at a time."

Marian felt very grateful, but she could not speak, for at that instant she was folding up the identical silk dress which she was to have worn at dinner, and for which Albert had promised to bring a girdle; and the contrast between then and now was too much for her to endure. She laid her head upon the bed and cried bitterly, and Hilda also shed a few tears for sympathy.

"Come, dear Marian, I cannot bear to see you cry. I will write you long letters about all that goes on. I shall feel more interest now that you know all the people here. But what am I to say to Albert? He will be desperate when he finds you gone, for I know he had laid himself out for a nice little flirtation with you this evening.

I never saw him so attentive to any one before as he has been to you since you came. He has come here every night, and yesterday he made me a fine speech in his way, saying that it was much to my credit to have formed an attachment to you, and showed him that with all my frivolity I could appreciate excellence when I saw it, and he hoped that I should cherish your friendship; and, as to you, there is no end to the fine things he said of you."

Marian felt somewhat soothed by this speech, and she proceeded to her packing with more fortitude.

"Another thing," said Hilda, good-naturedly; "do not vex yourself about that strange man coming here, thinking that Nancy will be annoyed. She really likes you; and, as nobody has seen him but the servants, she will not mind it, especially as she can tell them that he is in reality a

very great man in his own part of the country."

Mrs. Arl now returned. "I am sorry," said she, "to hurry you, but Mr. Wilcox is impatient. Are you quite sure you would not like one of the servants to go with you to the coach?"

Marian assured her most sincerely that she had much rather not have any one sent with her, and proceeded to leave messages of acknowledgment to Mr. Arl, and began a most inarticulate and involved phrase about Albert, which never was concluded.

"As to Mr. Arl, he will be sadly disappointed to find you gone, for he thinks that there never was any one like you. But see," continued she, displaying a piece of stuff of remarkably fine texture, "Mr. Arl gave me this the other day—it is French material, and very pretty in itself, only the colour does not suit me. Do you think

that Aunt Alice would wear it? Tell her I send it as a bribe to let you come again; and this bracelet you must wear for me yourself."

"This is a work-basket I trimmed for you," said Hilda, "like the one you admired so much; but I had hoped not to give it you so soon."

A message from Mr. Wilcox cut short all further leave-taking. On descending to the breakfast-room they found him fully equipped, with the additional fascination of a gaudily-striped shawl round his neck, which enveloped the lower part of his face.

"Well, as I often say to my wife, women have always so many last words; if it is only coming from a tea-drinking, there is more kissing and talking than a man would make to a friend going to the North Pole. Come, Marian, lass, cheer up; try a sip of brandy and-water, to cheer your heart up"

Marian only shook her head; she was now as anxious to set off as Mr. Wilcox could be.

"Well, I am sure, ma'am, we are uncommon obliged to you; and if ever you come our way, both I and my wife would be proud to see you. You have a fine water power here, and it is a mighty pretty place; but, to my thinking, you are the prettiest thing about it—and I dare say there are others of my persuasion."

With this, Mr. Wilcox stretched out his hard grimy hand to Mrs. Arl, who shudderingly placed the tips of two of her fingers upon it. She never shook hands heartily with any one, and she seldom attempted it with men, unless they had found great favour in her eyes. She fancied it rather aristocratic to be able to say, "I never shake hands when I can help it; it is an English custom, and, living

with foreigners, one gets out of the way of it."

She, however, embraced Marian very affectionately, and bid her write as soon as she arrived at home. Marian's trunk being by this time hoisted into the ambiguous vehicle, between a gig and a taxed cart, which Mr. Wilcox had hired for the occasion, Marian was handed up to her seat, and drawing her veil closely down over her face, they drove over the bridge, and were soon beyond the precincts of Carrisford Manor.

"I could not get much out of that conceited jackanapes who waited," said Mr. Wilcox, "but it must take a pretty penny to keep up that place and all them gimcracks. A man is afraid of his life to move amongst them all. I should never do there long. Our parlour-kitchen, with its bit of carpet and white-stoned floor, beats it out and out

for real comfort; and give me comfort before everything, say I." As Marian did not reply, he continued the conversation by himself. "Mrs. Arl is a very nice affable lady,—no pride about her—and no nonsense, but just what I like to see. What sort of a chap is her husband; is he as well looking as she is? I never saw a much prettier woman for her time of life and so long married. What age should you think she would be now?"

"I really never thought about it," said Marian.

"She is rising seven or eight and twenty, I should say," continued Mr. Wilcox. "What family have they?"

"None," said Marian, who did not admire this mode of speculating upon her friend's affairs.

"Well, more's the pity; it is a cold hearth where there are no children; and besides,

a handsome woman like that ought to leave the world some samples of what she has been."

By this time they had reached the inn, where they found Mrs. Wilcox awaiting them with great impatience. She had been sitting in her bonnet and shawl for more than half an hour, with a huge wicker reticule beside her, fully persuaded that the coach would go without them, but that it should not be *her* fault if they were not ready for it. She was a tall, angular, woman; her features were not bad, but they wore an expression of mingled severity and self-complacency which was not attractive. Nevertheless, Mrs. Wilcox was a good-hearted woman on the whole, only she had just then been put out of her way, by having had to sit with her hands before her, waiting for her husband and Marian, and she thought they had delayed shame-

fully, and that it was her duty to let them see that she thought so. There was, besides, another grievance over which she had been brooding; she was decidedly serious, and thought that worldly amusements were "works of the devil." Marian was her god-daughter, and she felt highly displeased, that, without any advice being asked from her, Marian had been allowed to go and stay with a family living in "the gay world."

"Well, John Wilcox, so thou art come back at last. I thought the coach must have gone without us. Do thou see that the boxes and the carpet-bag are all right in the office; the coach will be up directly, and we must be there to take our seats, for thou know'st I cannot abide sitting backwards."

Mr. Wilcox prudently departed to do his wife's bidding.

"Well, Marian," said she, turning to her, "thou doesn't look as if thy visit had done thee much good. I hear that Mrs. Arl is quite a worldly woman, altogether immersed in a round of gaiety and pleasure."

Marian was about to defend her friend, when Mr. Wilcox returned to say that the coach was up. Mrs. Wilcox looked round into every corner to see that nothing was left behind, and having ascertained that both her silk gloves were upon her hands, she gave the reticule to her husband, and allowed herself to be led to the coach; when, having with her own eyes seen the luggage upon the roof, she took her place in the front seat. Marian and Mr. Wilcox followed. The door was slammed to, and they drove off: but it was still some time before Mrs. Wilcox was seated to her satisfaction. When, however, her wicker-basket was in the right place, and the

window opened neither too much nor too little, and her feet comfortably raised upon the vacant cushion before her, she was at liberty to continue the suspended flow of her discourse. She made many inquiries as to Mrs. Arl's style of housekeeping, the number of her servants, and the company she kept. She was the more curious on these points, as there was a certain amount of mystery surrounding her notions of what the "children of fashion" (as she called them) were like—she would have been quite surprised to have found them like other people.

Marian replied as discreetly as she was able, but she had to deal with a carping listener.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Wilcox, "what has an immortal creature to do with all these vanities? What will all these things profit her when she comes to die? When she

lies upon a sick bed, what comfort will it give her to reflect that she has lived in a round of gaiety,—will all the balls and theatres and fine clothes comfort her then? They will do nothing for her poor soul; she will find all the treasures of the world and the glory of them no better than a silken stocking to a broken leg! It is to be hoped that she will awaken before it is too late. I hope, dear Marian, that you were not led away to go to the theatre, for that would, indeed, have been to enrol yourself in the ranks of the evil one."

Marian felt that her godmother's eloquence was aimed in a very wrong direction; it was not against the amusements of the world that she was just then needing to be warned. At length Mrs. Wilcox fell asleep, and Mr. Wilcox, who had been busily employed with his memorandum-book, turned to Marian, and said,

"I got a good notion from that fine fountain I saw playing this morning. There is a bit of ground just by our engine-house, and I will lay it out as a yard, and build wash-houses round it, where the women and the lasses may come and wash their clothes. I have often been sorry to the heart to see the upset it makes in their houses to get their bits of clothes washed. Here they will have both hot and cold water quite handy; they may bring each their own soap, and their clothes will be washed and dried in no time, and the expense will be nothing to signify,—at least, I shall nowise grudge it. I wonder I never thought of it before. It was seeing that fountain, which the man told me was fed by pipes from a pond in the kitchen-garden, which put it into my head. You see I shall have no distance to carry it. At first I thought of having a fountain and letting the lasses wash round in the

tank; but the weather is so uncertain, and besides, I don't like fantastical notions, so I have settled for a wash-house, and drying-house, and mangling-place; and here is a bit of a plan I have made."

Marian was cordially admiring the good man's scheme, when the coach stopped. They were at their journey's end. John Withers was waiting for them. His simple words, "God bless thee, Marian, I am glad to have thee home again," made Marian forget how sorry she had been to come. The old shandry was waiting and they drove home.

Aunt Alice had had the house thoroughly cleaned, and made as cheerful as possible; because she wanted it to look its best, that her darling Marian might not feel discontented at the change from all the grandeur she had described.

Tea was ready—a Guinea fowl had been

roasted, as Aunt Alice divined she must have left Carrisford before dinner. The good old lady had trotted a dozen times into Marian's room to see that all lay in the freshest order. She had dressed herself in her best gown, with an apron trimmed with real Brussels lace—a legacy of her old mistress. She had also brought out an antique silver cream-jug, which only saw the light on the grandest occasions. Having at length placed everything in the exactest order, there was nothing left either to do to or amend, and the dear old lady began to be impatient. She sat down and endeavoured to beguile the time with knitting; but she was nervous, and dropped a stitch for the first time since she was a little girl. She laid it aside, and took to listening for the sound of wheels. At length the sweet jingling of the ricketty old vehicle was heard, and in another

moment Marian's arms were flung round her aunt's neck.

"Dear Aunt Alice, how well you look! and how beautiful you have made the house!"

"How does it look to you, after all the grandeur you have been amongst? I hope they have not spoiled thee."

"It looks like you," said Marian, "and I love you dearly."

That evening was filled with pleasant talk. Aunt Alice and her father were as anxious to hear as she could be to talk of those she had left, and Marian went to bed much happier than she could have deemed possible a few hours previously.

CHAPTER IX.

It is a great pity that the existence of ghosts should be so dubious. A ghost would have the chance of making such fine researches and discoveries into human nature; and it seems contrary to the usual economy of nature, that such a fine field of observation should remain fallow. To be sure, if lightly revealed, the information would cause as much inconvenience as if the minutes of a privy council were sent to a newspaper, and the world made wise before its time. Next to being a ghost, the most curious thing would be to have the

power of presiding invisibly over affairs we had assisted to project, and in which our presence had been declared absolutely necessary—though "wisest fate said no," and carried us off accordingly in an opposite direction.

It would be a fine study to see the compensating power by which the absent are always dispensed with.

Modest as Marian was, one source of her distress at leaving Carrisford so abruptly, arose from thinking it very rude to run away in the face of a dinner party, for which her place at table had been retained. The idea that Mrs. Arl would be annoyed at seeing the symmetry of her party thus deranged, tormented Marian, and yet it is doubtful if she would have been better satisfied to learn the reality.

As soon as the gig containing Marian and Mr. Wilcox had driven away, Mrs. Arl

returned into the house. Her first care was to have the luncheon removed, to throw open the windows, and to light the perfume-burner, that the smell of brandy which had defiled the room might be done away. She also rubbed eau de Cologne over the hand that had come in contact with Mr. Wilcox. She then returned to the drawing-room, and whilst dawdling about, made "spills" of the letter she had written to John Withers. There was that blank, uncomfortable feeling of emptiness which people left at home generally feel after the departure of an inmate. Neither Mrs. Arl nor her sister returned to their interrupted occupations. "Let us have a walk in the garden," said Hilda. "I feel quite sorry that Marian is gone."

"Yes," said Mrs. Arl, "it is a pity she could not stay for the party; but perhaps it is as well not. I thought she had been in

better society. If we had been asked who she was, it would not have been so pleasant to see those Arundels looking surprised. What a mercy it was that nobody called whilst that strange man was here!"

"I wonder how Mr. Glynton would have felt if he could have seen that gig containing a young lady with whom he was acquainted, and whom he had actually asked to take wine at dinner!" said Hilda, laughing. "How I should have liked to see his dismay."

"Do not be so childish, Hilda. We may be very glad that he is not in the way. It would have given him a disgust to all of us, there and then. Marian is a nice girl in herself, but I wish you had not asked her to be your bridesmaid. It is making her too intimate."

"No matter," said Hilda, stoutly, "it is an old agreement, and when the time

comes I shall need to have some one to comfort me and keep up my spirits. The idea of having Marian with me is the only pleasant feature in the prospect."

"You are talking very ungratefully, Hilda. Any girl might jump at such a future as lies before you. Reflect upon the life you would have had at home; recollect what we were before the coming of Mrs. Fergus Blair."

"Ah! those days when we used to tie our pinafores high in the neck, and wear thick long sleeves, to hide our 'fat milk-maid arms,' as they called them," said Hilda, complacently pulling up the sleeve of her muslin dress, and admiring the beautiful hand and arm it displayed. "What nonsense it is to tell falsehoods to girls about their appearance, and make them feel awkward and ashamed of themselves, for no reason but to mortify their vanity;

as if, sooner or later, they will not find it out if they are handsome, and then the reaction of vanity will be all the stronger for its novelty. Do you remember how they told you that you were quite deformed, like that poor sewing girl whom we used to call 'crooked Sophy?'"

"To be sure I do," said Mrs. Arl, "and shall never forget the misery and shame I used to feel when I had to walk to church in that tight stuff dress, with tippet and sleeves to match, when I fancied that everyone we met was looking at me, and thinking what an object of pity I was. Well, we owe our aunt some thanks for delivering us from all that. She is a worldly old soul, but her coming was the beginning of our comfort."

"So it was," said Hilda, "and we have neglected her shamefully. Never mind, I will write to her to-morrow, and tell her

that I have waited till I could tell her something certain about Mr. Glynton—that will please her; and I will ask her to come and pay me a visit when I am married."

"Hilda," said Mrs. Arl, solemnly, "let me impress upon you the importance of one thing, which you do not seem disposed to recognise. When you are married, you must keep your visiting circle as select as possible. Everybody whom you ever saw will come and call, and try to be intimate. Those odious Sheffields and Borthwicks, who pretend to be old family friends, because they knew papa, and who never would have taken any notice of us if we had not risen in the world—I am obliged to keep them up in a distant manner; but I hope that you will cut them the first thing. It is no matter how you insult people; you will be all the more respected if you keep yourself select."

"Mrs. Borthwick is a kind-hearted, good woman, and took me to the Lakes."

"Well, she is very kind, I grant; but what has that to do with the matter? if you are to keep up your acquaintance with all who happen to be kind, a pretty menagerie you will have! You are about to become a county person, and the more difficult of access you show yourself, the more you will be respected and your acquaintance sought. But let us return to the house, for it must be time to think of dressing."

"Shall I dress for Mr. Glynton, as formerly; or may I venture on something more *recherché?*" asked Hilda.

"No; by all means keep to the moss rose and muslin dress, until you can replace them by diamonds and a Paris milliner."

On descending to the drawing-room, they found Mr. Glynton already there,

and with him was a tall, distinguished-looking man, whom he introduced to them as his friend Major Sir Frederick Wollaston, who had arrived unexpectedly that morning.

Mrs. Arl was very much pleased with such an addition to her dinner party, and recollected with satisfaction that Marian's place was vacant for him.

Poor Marian! Mr. Arl was the only person who really regretted her. Albert was in an ill-humour: like a spoiled child who has lost a toy, he contrived to feel himself ill-used by Marian, and, by way of consoling himself, plunged into an animated flirtation with the eldest Miss Vivian —a stylish, highly-dressed girl with a certain boldness of manner, which she considered high-spirited and aristocratic; but she was handsome, and could be very amusing. She began by quizzing Marian,

whom she had seen when making a morning call, and flattered Albert; so that, though at first he thought her intolerably impertinent, he ended by finding her very amusing indeed, and wondered that he had missed Marian so little.

The remainder of the party consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Vivian. Mr. Vivian had been a large woollen-manufacturer, but had retired from business on inheriting a large fortune from a distant relative, when he purchased a beautiful place called Mallow Hall. Backed by this, and the fact of their distant connection with the Vivians of Vivian Town, in the county ot Armagh, they commenced their career as a county family. Mrs. Vivian was a fair, plump woman, and looked like the housekeeper in a noble family. She had a passion for being dignified, and her manners partially reflected the society above her.

There was a great rivalry between the Vivians and Mrs. Arl. The heads of the respective houses had both been merchants, but Mr. Vivian retired from business, and had distant relations who were connected with old families, and one or two noble ones; whilst Mr. Arl was a foreigner, who had no relations at all in England; and Mrs. Arl, though very handsome and very accomplished, had no relations to signify. Mrs. Vivian's human nature was sadly tried on this day, when she saw Mr. Glynton as the affianced husband of Hilda, and Sir Frederick Wollaston brought as an uninvited guest. There were also a Mr. and Mrs. Sefton—very nice people, only they counted for nothing in the social war between Mrs. Arl and Mrs. Vivian, as Mr. Sefton had risen from nothing, and was now a partner in some large printworks in the neighbourhood.

Dinner was announced, and was served in great state. There was an ample display of plate. Mrs. Arl was supported on one side by Mr. Vivian, and upon the other by Sir Frederick Wollaston, who took occasion during dinner to tell her that he had come down to look out for a residence for his wife and family whilst his regiment was quartered in that neighbourhood, and he bespoke the favour of Mrs. Arl's acquaintance for them. He negligently mentioned his uncle, the Earl of Mortlock, whose park was within a drive, and seemed quite to expect that Mrs. Arl should be on visiting terms with the family. A bright idea struck Mrs. Arl: she suggested that Lady Wollaston would like to see the house before it was engaged, and invited the whole family to come on a visit to Carrisford, and look about them at their leisure for a suitable house. Mr.

Arl seconded the invitation, when he understood the case. Sir Frederick cordially accepted it, and the whole affair was settled before the party broke up.

CHAPTER X.

Day after day poor Marian watched for a letter with a sick and hungry heart. She was shut up, stifled, and oppressed at home, where nothing connected her with the brief life she had just led. She wandered about in the fields amongst the rocks, oppressed with a weight of suffering she could not divine. She shed tears, which did not restore her, for "the clouds return again after the rain." Rest was intolerable. She wandered about incessantly. She was full of a strange misery. All her thoughts looked back to what she had been doing in the

same day, in the same hour, of that precious week. She recalled the most minute incidents, and lived them over again. What were her thoughts about Albert she hardly knew—a veil of modesty hid her from her own consciousness. She scarcely ventured to think that he cared for her, and yet she could not help secretly thinking that he might have done so had she remained longer; but she had the true humility of love, and never thought of this but as of something much too grand and too good to fall to her lot. The glad, aimless activity of childhood had long since settled in the quiet and dreamy condition of girlhood. There is a vacant borderland in the experience of most women, where the social insignificance of childhood has been replaced by the long-coveted privileges of "grown-up people," without the heavy drawback of the cares and anxieties of real

life, which prevent the "grown up people" from enjoying their dignities — a period when their whole nature is ripe, but slumbering. This golden age was now in Marian broken up by the first stirrings of passionate emotion. Like one awakening, she began to beat the air in blind, half-conscious struggles to obtain she knew not what.

Her father saw the change, and it displeased him; he declared she had gained nothing but fine fancies, and was quite spoiled by her late visit. Aunt Alice grieved over the change, but she blamed her more gently; she had an instinctive insight as to the cause that lay at the root of the change; it reminded her of her own long past youth. She shook her head sorrowfully, but she hardly knew what remedy to apply. She recollected, indeed, the running up and down stairs, the trouble-

some children, and the heavy scouring of stairs and floors, which had assisted to distract her own mind; but the process was hardly available for Marian's case. Besides, it might be, after all, that there would be no need for it. Her darling Marian might be allowed to draw a more prosperous lot than had fallen to herself. She watched anxiously for the time when Marian should speak to her of what lay upon her heart.

One morning, about three weeks after Marian's return, as John Withers and Aunt Alice were sitting at breakfast,—for Marian had not made her appearance,—"Well," said he, turning over the letters, "there is one for Marian this time; I wish she had never gone to that place; it has done her no good, but made her discontented with home."

"She is but a lassie," said Aunt Alice,

kindly, "and she has no companions here. We must make allowances; this is but a dull spot for a young creature like her. I wish she had aught to do."

"Ay," said John, "to my mind women had better come and work in a factory than do nothing but sit all day with their hands before them. Surely you can find something to employ her. I don't want her to be a fine lady, with all her schooling. If she would but help me to keep my books a bit, it would be a great help to me. Just speak to her about it, and tell her it hurts me to see her so down."

Marian at that moment came in. "Here, now thou wilt be content," said her father, holding out the letter.

It was from Hilda, and was full of excuses and regrets for her delay, but they had been so busy, and now she had so much to tell, that she scarcely knew where

to begin. Then followed exclamatory descriptions of pleasant parties—a delightful steeple-chase—an archery ball—and, above all, raptures about the charming and fascinating Lady Wollaston, with whom Albert seemed quite enchanted. The whole ending with a hope that Marian would go and see them again some time.

This letter, like most letters that have been anxiously looked for, brought disappointment. Marian read it eagerly, in the hope of some message from Albert—the only mention made of him was his devotion to another. She rose from her untasted breakfast; and Aunt Alice, passing by her room a short time afterwards, heard the sound of sobbing. Marian had flung herself upon the bed, and was weeping as only the young can afford strength to weep; the letter had been crumpled and flung to the other end of the room.

"Poor dear, poor dear! She will have a weary world of tears to shed: if she begins in this way, how will she hold out till the end?"

The old lady judged it best to let the violence of her emotion pass over, before she made any attempt to comfort her.

But as the sobs continued, she entered and sitting down on a low stool beside Marian, she gently took her hand. "My dear child, do not cry like a person who has no sense, Whatever has happened you must bear it like another. What has distressed you? No bad news, I hope. Let me see this letter."

"You would not make it out, aunt. I am very foolish."

"Well, let me see," and the old lady put on her spectacles. and, with some difficulty deciphered the scrawl.

"Ah, well, young and old see things different; but sorrow is sorrow to both. I misdoubt but that you are thinking more of that young man than he thinks of you, and that does not answer; but it's what women have done before, and will do again, only it is supping sorrow by spoonfuls. But you must use your sense. It is not right to take on in this way. Think of those who are in real trouble,—there is poor Nancy Burton, whose two children are lying dead of scarlet fever; and think of poor Michael Kelly, who was killed only yesterday, going out quite well in the morning, and brought home to his wife dead before eleven o'clock; —there is real sorrow for you. People come into the world, dear Marian for something better than to go to balls and horse-races, and dancing with officers. Come, dry your eyes; I am going to see Mary Kelly, poor soul, and do you come with me. The more

you try to comfort other people the more you will be comforted yourself. And just look up any bit of black you may have to spare—any old pieces of crape or ribbon; she will be hard put to it to get mourning, and it will be a comfort to her to go decent to the funeral."

The paroxysm of Marian's grief had spent itself; she was ashamed of her passion; she kissed her aunt, and put on her bonnet to accompany her.

"It seems odd to me, lass," said her aunt as they went along, "that thou should think so little of thy father. He is worth a deal more than all them young chaps put together. I never saw the one to be equalled to him; there he sits day after day inventing the most wonderful things, about which you never trouble yourself. If you only gave your mind to it, you might learn a deal from him. You may

live to see him a parliament man yet. People have gone there from less beginnings."

"I am sure I love my father very dearly, aunt."

"Ay, lass, but you do not know half his value. You take no interest in the mill, nor in his works."

Words are sometimes of so much value, and at others of so little—sometimes they are the chaff which the wind carries away, and at others they are the fruitful seed of a precious harvest of after deeds. Marian listened to her aunt without at the time paying much heed to her, but the events of this morning had a strong latent influence upon her character. An accidental speech, uttered by another in our hearing, may be as the words of an oracle, and have a strange power to determine our actions. The experience testified by another always

comes to us with more effect than even what we have proved for ourselves; at least we believe ourselves better when we have the testimony from another. It is like a traveller finding the steps of those who crossed the desert before him.

They arrived at the cottage of the poor widow, who was quite a young woman, and had not been long married; Marian was awestruck before the astonished bewildered grief she saw in the poor woman.

"He went out from me in the morning well and handsome, and they brought him back to me in this way before eleven," said she, pointing to the bed where the body of her husband was lying, covered with a sheet.

Marian felt as if she had committed sacrilege in ever daring to think herself unhappy. When she returned home, she set to work to make a gown for the poor

woman. It was the first occupation she had attempted since her return.

At dinner-time her father brought a quantity of papers.

"Here, Marian, lass, I want thee to give me a turn of thy scholarship in making me a fair copy of these. It is the specification of a bit of a patent I am about to take out; and I have nobody just now to do it. If thou wilt come to the works, I will show thee what is meant by it."

Marian began upon it directly, and was surprised to find the difference there was between voluntary occupation taken up to please herself, and doing a thing that was really required, and in doing which there was a service performed.

In the course of the afternoon, Mr. Wilcox drove over. He was very full of the new wash-houses he had begun to erect, and he came to ask Marian to write

to Carrisford, to obtain information about the exact size of the pipe which supplied the fountain.

"You see, Miss Withers," he said, "another scheme has struck me. With a very trifling expense I can run up a place where the men may wash themselves after all the dirt and grease they have got at the mill. My missus says it is sin to put such fine notions into poor folks' heads. But I say, that when a man is dirty, he will do actions he would be ashamed to do if he were clean. People look at things in a different light. Now I am about water, my men shall have a swimming-bath, I'm determined."

Marian was very glad of the excuse to write so soon to Carrisford. She promised Mr. Wilcox to do so without delay, and also to walk over and bring him the answer.

CHAPTER XI.

A NEW HEROINE IS INTRODUCED.

THE women of England of the present day are eaten up with *ennui* to a much greater extent than is suspected; the devouring activity of their minds has been stimulated by the general increase of higher culture, but they find no adequate employment for it—capabilities and feelings are like the manna of the Israelites, certain to become spoiled unless kneaded up into the wholesome supply of daily bread.

In the days of our grandmothers, what superfluous energy was not worked off by domestic employment, broke out in gambling; this has, in our day, given place to a craving for emotion,—a more refined but still more dangerous resource; and it is precisely some of the best women who fall into it.

It often happens (in the rich middle ranks more especially) that there are women cultivated to a degree far superior to the society amongst which they are placed. Often they are gifted with the delicate perceptions and sympathies of genius, without its energy, and their fertile but passive nature wearies for the influence that, like the descent of the Angel of old into the water, is to stimulate its powers. If it comes, it is well; but if it does not come, then their rich gifts and their material pro-

sperity seem to rot away their life at the root: they add to the treasure-heap of precious things spoiled.

These are the women who are greedy of emotion, and who seize eagerly on a thing that promises to feed the hunger of their heart. If they were called upon to suffer privation or struggle with difficulties for those they love, they have the capacity to be saints or heroines; but left to themselves they only awaken the disciples' question, "To what purpose is all this waste?"

This is a somewhat Cassandra-like introduction of one, who, without controversy, was a very charming woman. Lady Wollaston was precisely one of those who, according to circumstances, might be a saint and heroine, or else make the misery of all connected with her. She had, however, as yet done neither.

No one could know her without feeling a strong interest in her. She was at this time twenty-seven or eight years old; a tall and well-rounded figure, a clear colourless complexion, dark violet eyes with long lashes, a profusion of silky brown hair, and a small well-shaped head. She had an air of high breeding, and her features wore an expression of refined intelligence, but she did not strike casual observers as being handsome.

On further acquaintance, however, many were disposed to think her beautiful. But her beauty seemed a fairy gift,—only those who loved her were able to discern it: indifferent persons passed her over as a proud, cold-looking woman, who seemed as if she could be very ill-tempered.

Lady Wollaston was not ill-tempered, and she was not cold, but she was very proud and very sensitive. Her feelings,

like her beauty, were recognised by few. She had been married six years, but had no family.

Lady Wollaston had been brought to Carrisford by her husband, very much against her inclination. She had a prejudice against people in trade which had never been corrected by experience, and she did not choose to barter her society for a matter of convenience; but her opposition was vain. Sir Frederick had been captivated by Mrs. Arl,—whom he considered one of the handsomest women he had ever seen;—and he gladly accepted her invitation for himself and his wife. He broke down all Lady Wollaston's opposition, and brought her to Carrisford with every prospect of remaining there so long as it pleased Mrs. Arl to amuse him.

Carrisford was a much pleasanter place

He was himself an amateur
some pretensions, and here
were fully appreciated. He
with Mrs. Arl and Hilda,
the accompaniments withou
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his wife did not practise. It
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Lady Wollaston, in the mean
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was a great deal at the house; but although a very good-looking young man and extremely well-disposed to devote his attention to her, he belonged to a different race, and did not, in her eyes, come under the category of young men at all. She scarcely noticed his existence more than that of the footman who stood behind her chair at dinner. Albert, however, had the taste to discern Lady Wollaston's superiority over all the women he had ever seen, and was disposed to fall desperately in love with her if he had dared.

They had been about three weeks at Carrisford, and were assembled at breakfast one morning, when Marian's letter arrived. Mrs. Arl read it with indifference, and passed it over to her husband, who forthwith began to expatiate to Lady Wollaston on Marian's excellencies. Her

ladyship always listened to Mr. Arl with attention, she liked him better than any one else. Albert perceiving that she seemed interested, carried on the conversation, and said a great deal more in praise of Marian than he felt. He did it for the sake of his own eloquence, and fancied that he had acquitted himself well in her eyes.

When the breakfast-table broke up he retired to the window to write a note, and there he was nearly concealed by the curtains. Lady Wollaston, unconscious of his presence, took a book and half-buried herself in a large reading-chair. Albert watched her from his retreat, and thought how graceful she was in all her movements.

After a little time Sir Frederick entered.

"Have you seen Albert?" said he to his wife, "I am looking for him everywhere.

I promised to ride over with him to Mortlock, to call on my uncle. I am going to have him proposed as a member of the Hunt."

"You surely are not thinking of such a thing; that young man has his business to attend to, and you are doing him no kindness in lifting him above his sphere. What pretension has a merchant's clerk to belong to the Hunt. I am surprised at your sudden fancy for these people. With the exception of Mr. Arl, they are, one and all, a vulgar, pretentious set. I cannot imagine why you brought me down amongst them. I was in hopes you intended to look at that house to-day."

"You are so consumedly proud," replied her husband, pettishly; "I never spent time more pleasantly in my life; and pray may I inquire what you have to say against

this young man, that I should not present him to my Uncle Mortlock?"

The lady appeared to read on, and did not deign to lift her eyes from the book.

"What fault have you to find with this young man, I ask?" repeated Sir Frederick.

"None in the world," replied his wife, turning over a leaf; "one does not criticise people of that sort: from your mode of speaking you seem to regard him as somebody, I have never thought of him as anybody."

The profound indifference of her tone, and the haughty annoyed expression of her countenance, convinced poor Albert that she meant all she said. He bit his lip through with rage, and looked around for the means to escape undiscovered, but unluckily a favourite pointer came bound-

ing into the room, and ran snuffing up to the place where he sat.

The instant Lady Wollaston perceived him, and knew that he must have overheard her, a deep blush overspread her face. Proud she certainly was, but she never wilfully offended the feelings of any one. The better part of her nature was at once aroused. After the pause of a second, she said in a tone so gentle that it seemed to come from another woman,

"Mr. Albert, I did not know that any one was here except my husband. I was wrong to speak so insolently; will you forgive me?"

The sensibility and feeling in her face revealed, as by a flash of lightning, the deep and tender nature lying below that cold, proud surface, but Albert only felt bitterly that she would have said as much to a beggar whom she had pained.

"You only spoke the truth, Madam," said he, with proud humility. "I am aware of my distance from you."

Lady Wollaston was more sorry than for anything she had done in her life before. The grave and almost touching tone in which he spoke, struck her as the expression of a distinguished nature, and for the first time she was conscious of his existence.

"But I was very impertinent," she rejoined warmly, "and I hope you will be generous and forgive me."

"Your present kindness would atone for a grievous sin, had you committed one; whereas you only spoke the truth. I can only remember the kindness which has prompted your apology."

He bowed with an air of profound respect and withdrew.

Lady Wollaston felt very remorseful,

and, with a not unnatural revulsion of feeling, she was now disposed to exaggerate her own wrong and the good taste with which she considered he had extricated himself from his position.

"Well, Lady Wollaston, I hope your pride is satisfied now; I must say I never saw a young fellow behave better, and he must have felt very cut with what you said."

"I am very sorry for what has happened; and I shall not rest until I have removed any painful impression that remains."

"You will not find that so easy, I can tell you, notwithstanding that he took it so quietly."

Sir Frederick stood on the hearth-rug with his back to the fire-place and began to whistle. He was rather pleased than not his wife had been mortified; and in

reality he cared very little for Albert's feelings after the awkwardness of the first moment had passed away.

It was now too late to carry out his intention of riding over to Mortlock Park, but catching a glimpse of Hilda and Mrs. Arl as they crossed the lawn, he recollected that he had promised to give Hilda a lesson in archery, and followed them into the garden.

Lady Wollaston was not inclined to resume her reading. She occupied herself in thinking how she should make amends to Albert for the pain she had caused him. It was not altogether the abstract virtue of wishing to make reparation; he had made a favourable impression upon her, and she felt a new-born disposition to cultivate his acquaintance. The pride which hardened the surface of her character prevented her feelings being often

roused; they were not confused and weakened by being exposed to the breath of every passing circumstance, so that she naturally was apt to believe in them when they made themselves heard.

Albert meanwhile had quitted her presence and wandered he scarcely knew where, until he found himself in the thickest and most unfrequented portion of the park.

He flung himself down upon the fern, all unconscious of the soft, fresh scents and sounds of the lovely summer morning. His heart was filled with wild indignant rage, and for a while there was nothing but a confusion of shame and pain, as though he had received a blow from some one's hand.

He lay for sometime stunned and stupified; gradually the ferment in some degree subsided.

"The proud devil!" he muttered; "the

glory it would be to make thee feel thyself a woman! to rouse up all the passion that is slumbering in thy soul and make thee know, in thy turn, the pang of being scorned! to run thee down in all defences, and make thee show thyself as weak and trusting as any other woman."

He rose and began to walk with impatient and random steps; he plunged into a deep thicket of brushwood and brambles, which led, by a precipitous descent, to the bed of a stream, the course of which was impeded by the trunk of a large tree that had been uprooted in some storm. The exertion of forcing his way through it somewhat calmed his excitement, and he sat down upon the fallen tree to consider what he should do.

"Oh, how I hate her!" was his first thought; but then, as he recollected her in all her high bred gracefulness, and her

immense superiority over all other women he had seen, his rage gave way to passionate admiration; he recollected the touching gentleness when she found she had wounded his feelings, but when he thought of this he started up as though stung by a serpent.

"What do I want with her damned pity and regret! she would have said as much to her servant! I am no one, nothing, not even a human being in her eyes. If she had insulted me as an equal I could have forgiven her—but to apologise, not because she had spoken insultingly of a man, but because it had lowered her to be overheard in unprovoked insolence towards her hosts. Does she think I do not see through it all! and does she expect me to bow, and smile, and be grateful for her condescension? Proud devil! you shall know yourself and know

me too before we have done. You shall own your master yet!"

Poor Lady Wollaston was far from suspecting the enemy she had aroused, nor the fierce love and hatred, which, like a two-edged sword of evil, was about to be turned against her.

* * * * *

Albert reappeared at dinner.

Strong feeling of any kind sets a man free from all petty vulgarism and vanity. Lady Wollaston was disposed to regard him through a favourable medium, and she wondered within herself how she had ever come to speak of him disparagingly. She had come quite prepared to notice him and to be friendly with him; but he gave her no opportunity. Without the least appearance of resentment or ill temper, he exhibited a cold respectful demeanour, which had anything but a bad effect.

After dinner he reminded Mrs. Arl of Marian's letter, offered to obtain the information she asked for, and left the room apparently for that purpose. When he was gone Mrs. Arl said,

"I cannot think what possesses Albert to take so much trouble about Miss Withers; generally he does not care for young girls. I should not like him to marry her, he might do so much better. She is a nice girl herself, but her family is against her; and I own I have a great prejudice in favour of good family."

"Ah, indeed. Yes," said Lady Wollaston absently.

Mrs. Arl sat down to write her letter, and Lady Wollaston began to net a purse in silence.

CHAPTER XII.

ALBERT.

It is not absolutely essential, but it is always pleasant, to learn as much as possible of the history of those who come in contact with us. Not the ostensible biography presented to the public,—the mere birth, parentage, and education,—but the more true and secret history of the individual's life and errors, as they have been actually transacted, and as much as possible concealed by him.

It is an instinct of human nature, which

in its practical development manufactures scandal, and tends to set society very much by the ears; but it is capable of being made to serve better ends, and the abuse of it only shows the short allowance of truth on which the public is kept; and the extremities to which hungry people are reduced. We all wish to penetrate beneath the show of seeming, under which every body tries to hide. Books of biography would be invaluable, if the writers did not feel bewitched to keep up appearances, and to throw a summer hue over all the human nature that comes under their hands. Telling the truth is not a thing people can do for themselves; let all who ever tried to keep a diary, reflect how much they have suppressed.

If the personages in this history do not appear equal to the true heroic or romantic standard, let the reader recollect

that "there is no dressing" in them (to use a professional term), and that they really were such as they are shown.

Albert Le Mare, was the cousin of Mrs. Arl and Hilda, the son of their mother's brother, who made a run-away match with a Scotch girl of high family but small fortune; made less by this circumstance, as the lady's friends found it very convenient to make her imprudence an excuse for affording her scanty assistance. They lived in a proud thrifty poverty in Wales, upon a farm which the sale of the gentleman's commission as lieutenant enabled them to purchase. Albert was their only child. Under any circumstances it would have been an arduous task to educate him wisely and successfully, but as neither his father nor mother were perplexed by theories of education, they were spared a great deal of anxiety.

Albert was a very beautiful child and showed much precocious intelligence. At an early age he developed a passion for music and an aptitude for acquiring it, that looked almost like genius. His mother was very proud of him, and indulged him in every whim; his father alternated between laxity and severity, and it was always more or less a matter of chance whether his father would beat him for his juvenile delinquencies, or praise him for his spirit; calling him at the same time "a sad dog," and a "regular young Pickle."

Whilst young, his mother professed "to hear him his lessons," but the attempt generally ended in a fit of crying or a pretended headach, which always ensured a holiday. When he grew older his father took him in hand, but though a good scholar, he proved even a worse teacher than his mother had been,—violence of

temper, irregularity of lessons, and laxity of discipline produced the natural results.

Yet something might have been made of Albert with proper care. He had a quick, nervous, sensuous temperament, a passionate sense of beauty, which he showed even as a young child, and a great faculty of imagination. Altogether, it was a rich tropical nature, capable of maturing the finest qualities, if it had been subjected to wise discipline. As it was, an indolent self-indulgence, a dread of pain, and a shrinking from everything in the least disagreeable, eat up all manliness and excellence out of his nature. Several acts of juvenile profligacy had been screened by his mother, who as a matter of course doated upon him, and to do him justice, he always showed her the small attentions for which mothers are so grateful. Sundry debts, however, to a somewhat heavy

amount came to the paternal knowledge, and brought down heavy displeasure upon Albert, too evidently the result of anger and the inconvenience he had caused, to do anything more than embitter the father and son against each other.

It became necessary to think what should be done with him. Albert himself wished to study music, but that of course was not a profession "for a young man of so good a family." The father inclined to the law, but the mother's ambition was for the army, in which several of her relations had obtained both rank and distinction, and she hoped through their influence to be able to obtain for him a pair of colours.

During the interregnum of idleness caused by the negociation, Albert's father died, leaving a very slender provision for his widow. Her friends did not succeed

in begging a commission, and were not disposed to purchase one, and Albert's prospects looked doubtful enough when his aunt, Mrs. Fergus Blair, made interest with Mr. Arl to take him into his business, and to give him a salary rather beyond what his services were worth. It was a terrible coming down to all his notions; but there was no help for it. His aunt soothed him with the hope of better things, and promised to exert all her influence to obtain a commission for him in the Company's service; and in the meanwhile the proud, spoiled, indulged youth condescended to occupy a high stool in Mr. Arl's warehouse in Manchester.

If Mr. Arl had continued to take an active part in the concern, he would not have tolerated such a fine gentleman-clerk for a single week; but, luckily for Albert, he was seldom there, and the actual head

of the concern took a liking to him, and showed much lenity towards him, as Mrs. Arl's cousin.

As time wore on, without the hoped-for commission, he resigned himself to his fate, and began to speculate upon being ultimately taken into partnership.

Mrs. Arl was very proud of her handsome cousin; he nearly lived at the house, and she always quoted him and spoke of him when she had the opportunity; he was her one link of connexion with people of distinction, and she prized it accordingly. Thus matters stood at the time Albert met with Lady Wollaston. The morning after the occurrences related in the last chapter, Albert left Carrisford early in the morning, long before the usual breakfast hour. The excitement of the previous day had subsided, leaving only a vexed, depressed sense of humiliation.

When he looked at Lady Wollaston, all his wild thoughts of revenge seemed like bad dreams. She looked so superior to every one around her that in his heart he scarcely wondered at the contempt she had expressed. To do him justice, it was not her rank nor her position that influenced him. He was madly in love with her; and she was to him what the vision of Iphigenia was to Cymon, making him feel, for the time being, anxious to do something to be worthy of her notice. His pride had been grievously wounded; but it had riveted her influence. It was the faculty of sympathising with noble emotions, and the strong feelings that from time to time gleamed up amid the waste and chaos of his life, that made the redeeming feature of Albert's character. He had strong sensibilities—he was still a very young man, and his extravagances had not yet blunted them—he

had many amiable qualities; but the worst of it was that he had no stability, nor any abiding root of principle in him.

A few days afterwards Albert received orders to depart for Hamburgh, on business connected with the house; thence he would have to repair to Vienna, to Trieste, and possibly to Constantinople. He certainly was not a person to select for an extraordinary mission; but his knowledge of continental languages, the only branch of his education that had come to any perfection, made the choice fall upon him. Nothing could have been more in accordance with his desires.

There was little time for preparation. Lady Wollaston was surprised to find herself regretting that she would not be able to put in practice her improved disposition towards him, and her farewell was as gracious and cordial as she could make it.

Hilda and Mrs. Arl were, of course, very sorry to lose him; and their rehearsal of the opera would be at a complete stand until his return; but Mrs. Arl comforted herself with the reflection, that it would sound rather distinguished to say that her "cousin had written to her from Constantinople." Mr. Arl gave Albert credentials and letters to various bankers and heads of commercial houses with whom he was connected in business. Mr. Glynton also gave his future cousin other introductions, which if not so respectable were a great deal more agreeable. Letters, some to old companions of his own, men of fashion in the towns he would visit, and some to women, whose reputation was for being more pleasant than proper. Glynton had been a great deal abroad, and knew everybody—he had religiously cut all his dissipated connexions since his shattered

health and subsequent engagement to Hilda had made him resolve on a new course of life; but as Albert was a handsome young man, without serious intentions of any kind, Glynton saw no reason why he should not take the opportunity to see as much of life as possible.

They sat up together smoking their cigars on the night before Albert's departure, and the reformed patriarchal rake gave the benefit of his experience to the young aspirant, who was starting on the career he had quitted.

All young men have an intense desire to become "men of the world," and they perpetrate their various Don Juanisms more from the idea of being dashing and adventurous, and shewing "a knowledge of life," than from real attraction towards profligacy.

Albert was on the threshold of manhood,

with a fund of animal life and fervour which disguised from him the hideous cynicism of Glynton's experience; for to Glynton nothing remained but experience—the dull, burned out embers of sensuality, — the decaying remains of a wasted existence.

These two men, as they sat there, were the beginning and the end of the same career brought together. But Albert was too much intoxicated with the sense of life and its glad instincts to realise the example of moral and physical decomposition which was before his eyes; he could only take up what he understood, and he listened to Glynton's recitals of his former exploits of gallantry and debauchery with the same admiration that an ardent youth of old might have listened to legends of the Round Table, or the exploits of more modern and authentic knights. When they separated he was fully impressed with the

glory of becoming an accomplished man of the world. It certainly did strike him that Glynton was an old man for his age. "Ah but," said he to himself, as he extinguished his candle, "he has never recovered from having to stand up to the waist in half-frozen water that bitter night. That was a devil of an adventure; no constitution could have stood it, and I shall never be caught doing anything like that. What a sensible fellow he is! and what a bad opinion he has of human nature! I wish I may be half as successful as he has been!" Albert fell asleep and dreamed of beautiful countesses, gambling-houses, and wonderful adventures.

The next day he departed in great spirits, determined to spend his life to the greatest advantage: spend it, indeed, as savages spend gold, ignorant of the worthlessness of what is given them in exchange. After

his departure the house became intolerably dull. Whether it were that Mr. Glynton was taken with remorse at the retrospect of his past life, or whether he were cross to see so much of it lie behind him and so little before him, or whether the fair Hilda relaxed in her fascinations is not known; but it is certain that for the whole of the week following Albert's departure Mr. Glynton was more than usually tiresome. He insisted that Hilda should decline an officer's ball, when she had set her heart upon going. He prevented Mrs. Arl calling upon the wife of one of the officers who had brought a letter to her, because he fancied he recollected some obsolete scandal about her. It is remarkable that men like Glynton never allow to women the grace of repentance for the most trifling error. He had, too, a touch of lumbago, brought on by the east wind,

which did not tend to improve his temper, or incline his heart to gaiety, though he would have died sooner than complain.

He rode over to Carrisford every day at the same hour, and either accompanied Hilda upon a ride, or if the weather were unfavourable, he sat beside her whilst she worked, and picked up her worsteds or her scissors, and occasionally paid her compliments that might have been made of Dresden china, to match the shepherds and shepherdesses on the mantel-pieces. Sometimes he related solemn traditions of the reign of Queen Charlotte, "who never allowed any but virtuous women to come to court." He had travelled a great deal, and was by no means a fool; he had known a good many remarkable people, and he could have told her many interesting anecdotes about them; but he was so possessed with the notion that scarcely any-

thing was proper enough to tell an unmarried woman, that his most interesting recitals were confined to catalogues of court dresses, and details of the etiquette that prevailed at different courts. He had been at Vienna during the time of the Congress, and knew many of the remarkable persons who figured at it, but all the information he ventured to give Hilda was, that the temporary ball-room was lighted up every night by ten thousand wax-candles.

Mr. Glynton was not a fool, but he was in an entirely new position where he had no experience to go upon. He considered matrimony as the crowning propriety of a man's life. He had delayed as long as possible, but having made up his mind to it, he determined to do it well. The very day upon which he engaged himself to Hilda he gave orders, likewise, to engage a large square pew in the nearest church, to be

lined with crimson cloth, and supplied with a requisite complement of bibles and prayer-books, all in the richest binding. He felt on the whole rather self-complacent at the idea of matrimony; upon which he was entering in the spirit of the old freebooters, who were wont to make their peace with the church when they had little time left to do further mischief. Marriage was in his eyes a solemn atonement for all the irregularities of his past life, an act of allegiance and conformity to social virtue which would entitle him ever after to take rank as a respected and dignified member of the community. His ideas of what "young females," as he called them, ought to be, were more than rigid. A "modest woman" was to him an abstraction, from whom all the human nature had been discharged.

Poor Hilda! she was likely to pay dear

for the honour of having a fine house and park and establishment. She would have had the chance of a happier lot if she had made interest to be committed to the tread-mill for hard labour the rest of her days!

CHAPTER XIII.

At length an agreeable incident arose to vary the monotony of poor Hilda's purgatory. It came in the shape of an invitation for all of them to spend a week at Mortlock Park along with Sir Frederic and Lady Wollaston, who were engaged to go there previous to removing to Mayfield, which was the name of a quaint old-fashioned family residence between Carrisford and Mortlock Park, which they had taken furnished, for the six months they expected to remain in the neighbourhood.

Mrs. Arl had now touched the zenith of

her social ambition, which was, to take her place in high society; and she prepared on the present occasion, to show herself quite worthy of the honour to which she had been admitted.

Previous to going to Mortlock, her indomitable goodnature, which was the redeeming feature of her character amid all its worldliness and vanity, induced her to write to Marian, who she knew was just then feeling very dull at home; giving her a long description of all that had happened since her departure, and dwelling with great complacency upon their intended visit; indeed there was a great satisfaction in writing about it to such a devout friend and admirer as Marian. In spite of her disapproval of Albert's entertaining any "serious intentions" about Marian, the weakness of desiring to give her pleasure for the moment, and to increase the effect

of her letter, induced her to repeat every civil speech Albert had ever made about her, thus giving consistency to all the vague exaggerations in which he had dealt, for the sake (as he hoped) of producing an effect on Lady Wollaston.

Mrs. Arl did not know all the mischief she was doing, but she liked excitement. "Idleness is the mother of mischief," and she has a terribly large family; this love of excitement is perhaps the most mischievous of the lot.

Mrs. Arl intended no harm; she said things and forget them, and was quite surprised to find that any one had attached importance to them. She was too good-natured to fling firebrands in sport, but her fireworks were almost as dangerous.

Meanwhile she departed in great glory to Mortlock Park, and her letter travelled post to Marian. It would be hard to say

whether Marian or Mrs. Arl were made the happier.

Marian was enchanted with her letter: she read over and over again the passages which referred to Albert; she had no idea that things could be ever different to what they seem; those light words spoken to pique another and retailed in weak good nature, were like that fairy tent in the "Arabian Nights," which could spread out until it covered a vast army. Marian lodged countless hopes under the shadow of that letter.

At length she took it to show Aunt Alice, the kind inquiries it contained about her, and the civil hope that Mr. Wilcox was succeeding with his fountain. Her step was too light and her eyes too bright for Aunt Alice to be able to find in her heart to make the sensible observation that rose to her lips after reading the letter, which

says a great deal for the dear old lady's self denial; for we all know how much it costs the best of us to suppress an epigram or a piece of good advice.

"Now, aunt, is it not a kind letter?"

"Ay, ay, lass, I say nothing against it, only she seems very set up with fine folks, and may be I would have thought as well of her if she had not done her best to encourage thy thoughts to run on that young chap. Well, well, lass, dunnot look vexed; it is natural thou and I should see things different, but many's the sore heart that comes of thinking much of folks who don't think of thee."

Poor Aunt Alice sighed; it was the epitome of her own experience; but though she sighed it was more for Marian than herself. She had long ago accepted her own lot, and could now look back to her former sorrows as though they had

happened to some other person. She had no idea now of wishing that things had been otherwise than they actually were.

"Well, but aunt," said Marian, to change the subject, "you must say that it is very good of her to send such a nice message to Mr. Wilcox; if you knew how elegant she is in all her ways, you would wonder how she could take interest in a person so different as Mr. Wilcox."

"It shows her sense," replied Aunt Alice; "I wish thou wert not so taken up with outside show. Mr. Wilcox, maybe, is a bit rough in his ways, but look how many folks are the better for his being in the world. Thou'lt see he will care nothing for all her fine speeches."

Mr. Wilcox, as it happened, came in with John Withers to dinner, and Aunt Alice was surprised, not to say somewhat annoyed, to see how extremely pleased and flattered

the good man was at being noticed by Mrs. Arl; a smile broke out all over his face, although he tried to restrain it whilst he said,—

"Well, it is very condescending in her to remember me, and you will make my best respects to her. She is what I call a real nice woman, and every bit a lady; no pride, no nonsense about her, but as cordial and affable as if she were no more than my old missus. I am sure she made me as welcome as if she had known me twenty years. I felt at home with her directly. I would not mind asking her to come over to see us at Borrow Clough after the buildings are finished."

Marian went cold at the very notion of Mr. Wilcox sending an invitation to Mrs. Arl. She liked to hear Mrs. Arl's praises, but she had an instinct that she did not

admire Mr. Wilcox so much as he fancied she did.

"Well," said Mr. Wilcox, as he rose to go, "you must all come and dine with us the day after to-morrow. There is a grand chap come to inquire about mills and manufactures like. I don't know what he wants with them, but he is a grand talker, and seems mightily interested in us spinners."

"Ay, indeed," said John Withers, "is he going to build a cotton-mill? this is not the time to begin; he should have done that years ago, those were the times for making money; these are only days for losing it. As Solomon says, 'there is a time for everything.'"

"Nay, I know naught about him; only he brought me a letter from our member, begging me to show his friend, Mr. Cun-

ningham, all that was worth seeing in these parts. I think he had best have sent him to you, Mr. Withers," added Mr. Wilcox, with a sense of complacency at having been preferred himself.

"Nay," said John Withers, "thou hast two mills where I have but one, and thou hast done more for him than ever I am like to do. Well, I reckon we'll be with you, day after to-morrow, that is Friday?"

"Ay, and dinner at one precisely."

This invitation inspired no pleasant anticipations in Marian. She only thought how different it would be to her last dinner party at Carrisford, and she wished she might be ill, or that something would happen to keep her at home.

She retired to read once more Mrs. Arl's letter, and to indulge without interruption in all the hopes and emotions it had raised. To fall in love on the voluntary system

is a somewhat hazardous proceeding for a woman. There are ten thousand romantic girls, who read Bulwer's novels, and fall to dreaming of the heroes who take their fancy, building up imaginary scenes and incidents in which they enact the parts of heroines to their own great satisfaction, and fancy it Love.

There are girls too without number, who in a ball-room take a fancy to some one of their partners, talk over him and his attractions with their companions, under the title of "telling secrets," till between the flutter of vanity and idleness, they believe themselves "*in love.*" But love is not such a thing as this; love is serious as life; and to love, in the true acceptation of the word, is not altogether a light or an amusing thing.

Love is the first influence by which the soul is raised to a higher life.

The first love may be foolishly placed; its end may be unfortunate; it may perhaps be the first experience in sorrow; it may be scorned and thrown back upon the loving heart that offers it; but so long as either man or woman is enabled to love truly, so far as their love is pure and noble, it is counted to them for spiritual life, and is the first stage of that journey "from strength to strength," which life was given man to attain.

Let no young romantic girl fancy that love is the easy self-indulgence of a pleasant emotion,—

> "The power to love was given
> That self might be annulled."

To love is to be lifted out of self, to become humble in one's own eyes,—for love inspires the desire to become nobler and better, in order to be more worthy

of the beloved object. A woman, when she loves, ceases to consider her beauty, her graces, or her talents, as ornaments for herself merely: all that she possesses becomes sanctified into offerings to him she loves.

Humility is the first quality which a true and noble love awakens in the heart. Vanity and all littleness is burnt out of the soul where a true and noble love has been kindled; for love is a purifying influence, and nothing mean or unworthy can long exist in its presence.

Love makes all in whom it dwells strong and courageous to perform every duty that is laid upon them; not in distaste and weariness, but as a perpetual offering to the presence in which they dwell.

Love opens a nobler insight into life; it awakens new faculties, it transfuses into the commonest and meanest realities

a spiritual element which gives them a significance they never before possessed,

> "It is the heart that magnifies this life,
> Giving a truth and beauty of its own"—

but the beginning and ending of its law is comprehended in this,—living for another, and ceasing to live for self.

Marian had the germ of this true love in her heart. She was dreamy and unsettled, but the one prevailing idea which had been roused in her mind was, that she must try to become worthy of Albert.

She certainly hoped that sometime, when she had improved very much, Albert would love her in return, but the intenseness of her own feelings occupied her too much to leave any room for speculating upon what he felt for her.

As yet, however, Marian possessed but

the germ of future excellence, and Aunt Alice was sadly perplexed by the phenomena of idleness, and restlessness, and variableness of humour in Marian, which she had never before observed. It is an uncomfortable fact that first attempts at improvement seem more remarkable for discrepancies and short comings, than when things were allowed to take their course in the old routine way, no one caring whether they were right or wrong. It is a solecism which has perplexed wise men and tormented good ones, "that we cannot do the things which we would;" there is nothing for it but perseverance. To live wisely and to live well, requires practice like all other arts.

END OF VOL. I.

MARIAN WITHERS.

BY

GERALDINE E. JEWSBURY,

AUTHOR OF "ZOE," "THE HALF-SISTERS," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE HISTORY

OF

MARIAN WITHERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE DINNER AT BORROW CLOUGH.

"I AM thinking, lass," said Aunt Alice, "we had best start betimes; may be we can lend a hand to Mrs. Wilcox; there will be plenty to do, and her servant is not over handy."

Marian made no objection, and they set off directly after breakfast, on the day appointed. Aunt Alice put up a cream-cheese, a pot of damson preserves, and a couple of Guinea-fowls, as a pre-

sent to Mrs. Wilcox. Aunt Alice was famous for having good things, and for being an excellent cook.

Aunt Alice and Marian went into the house without ceremony, and found Mrs. Wilcox sitting in the back-kitchen, plucking a goose. She flung the feathers out of her lap into a basket with a jerk, and rose to welcome them.

"Well, Mrs. Alice, it is very good of you to come so early, for I am fair moidered with all that has to be done, and that lazy hussy of mine is worse than nothing,—only think of her breaking the largest meat dish! How do you do, Marian? You see our doings are not so genteel as those you come from; but we make no pretence to be fine people; we are just rough and ready, so you must expect no better." And Mrs. Wilcox recommenced her labours on the goose.

"Will you find your way up-stairs?" she said again. "The room is not set to rights yet; but you will find a place to put your bonnets in—but, perhaps, you will like to rest first. What will you have after your walk?"

They both declined refreshment, and after they had taken off their bonnets and shawls, Aunt Alice uncovered her basket and offered the little present she had brought.

"Well, I'm sure you're very good. You see I am not accustomed to give dinners; our cooking is just for hungry folks, and not for fancy things. I was thinking of giving them a good solid dinner. There is a piece of beef that has lain in salt, and I was going to boil it to-day; though I doubt how it will eat, for I was obliged to trust Hannah to salt it. I told her whatever she did, not to put too much

petre with the salt, but she would not mind me, and I am sure it will be spoiled; but it is too late now to help it. Then there is this goose of my own rearing; it ought to be at the fire now, and the giblets are stewing for a pie, only my hand is not good at making paste. I would have got some fish, but there was none."

"It will never be missed," said Aunt Alice, "and if you like I will make the paste, and Marian shall make some custards, whilst the fire is at liberty; for she has a very pretty notion of cooking, though I say it who taught her."

"I suppose your friend, Mrs. Arl, is too much of a fine lady to help the servants when there is company," said Mrs. Wilcox, who was not in a good temper. Marian dreaded the chapter of Mrs. Arl, and dexterously turned the conversation

to other things; pinning her dress round her, she put on an apron, and set to work with a degree of skill that quite propitiated Mrs. Wilcox.

"You have not told us who is coming," said Marian, looking up from the sauce-pan.

"I have not invited any young men for thee; thou holds thyself so high, thou art no favourite with them; they say thou art too conceited to live, and I would not have that said of me, if I were thee; thou wilt ne'er find an honest man to have thee at that rate."

"Marian has plenty of time before her," said Aunt Alice, good naturedly; "but if there be no young men, I suppose there are some old ones coming."

"You are right there, ma'am. There will be Mr. Tyrrel, and Mr. Basset, two of the preachers,—blessed men both of

them; and there is some grand chap who has come down to this neighbourhood to see the mills; he is curious in machinery, Wilcox tells me. Then there are some of the neighbours, John Withers, and you two, which will be all; and I expect, Marian, that thou wilt sit in the parlour and keep them all company, as you have had so much school learning, whilst I see to sending in the dinner."

By the help of Aunt Alice and Marian, the dinner was brought into a comfortable state of forwardness, that gave promise of its not being more than half an hour after the time appointed; after which, Marian proceeded to set the table for dinner in the parlour-kitchen, for no earthly consideration would have induced Mrs. Wilcox to allow her parlour to be dined in. The Wilcoxes belonged to the old race of spinners; by industry and

saving they had risen from the ranks, and their housekeeping was on a most frugal scale. No modern innovation had penetrated into their dwelling; and although Samuel Wilcox was now a rich man, and the owner of two large mills, their style of living continued to be what it had been twenty years previously.

The house, a substantial stone-building, adjoined the mill. The front-door opened into a passage, covered with a strip of oilcloth, from which all trace of pattern had long since been trodden away. On one side of this passage was a large kitchen, which in its furniture was partly a sitting-room; a sofa, covered with print, and stuffed with feathers, stood beneath the wide low window, which was neither sash nor casement; two large three-cornered arm-chairs, with semicircular backs, stood opposite to each other in the

chimney corner. The ceiling was covered with a frame, upon which a good store of oat-cakes were drying; a few wooden book-shelves were put up in one corner, and round the walls hung coloured prints representing the execution of some of the mutineers at the Nore, the death of Nelson, and the funeral of the Princess Charlotte, the likenesses of sundry Methodist ministers, and an almanack in a black frame; some wooden chairs, a settle, and a carved oak chest, which held the family linen, and a large old-fashioned dining-table, completed the furniture. The only attempt at luxury was a cushion placed in the broad window sill, and a piece of carpet in the centre of the white stoned floor. Over the chimney-piece there was a bright array of shining tin and copper kettles.

Marian proceeded to lay the cloth, but

the appliances were wonderfully meagre; black-hafted knives and two-pronged steel forks, and the supply of those eked out with odd green ones, with curiously curved blades; everything else was in the same primitive fashion. Some of the tumblers were engraved with mystic freemason signs, for John Wilcox was a member of that honourable body. After her labours were fulfilled she went into what Mrs. Wilcox called her "tea-room," and which was the secret pride of her heart. The walls were stained pea green, and the furniture was real mahogany; the carpet was covered with roses and lilies of the most radiant colours. A sampler, worked by Mrs. Wilcox when a girl, with all the glories of a red cow and a lilac donkey grazing at the bottom of it, hung over the chimney-piece, above a little plaster cast of Cupid, with all his insignia complete, which good

Mrs. Wilcox had bought one day in Manchester, under the idea that it was intended for a guardian angel, and as such she placed it in her tea room! There was nothing more for Marian to do. She was turning over the old numbers of the "Methodist Magazine" and "Jewish Records," much in the way that hungry people can eat anything, when Mr. Wilcox came in, accompanied by a middle-aged gentleman in deep mourning. He was rather stout, and his figure was not imposing, but there was an expression of calm power in his face,—a mixture of intellect and goodness, which, lighted as it was by a pair of large planet-like eyes, made Marian think him the very handsomest man she had ever seen, not even excepting Albert.

"Well, Marian, lass," said Mr. Wilcox, taking hold of both her hands, "and how dost do? I was afeard thou wouldst have

forgot to come—you young lasses are given to let your promises run out of your heads."

"You do not deserve to be answered; when did I ever forget anything I promised you?"

"Well, well, thou art a saucy gipsy! Mr. Cunningham, this is my goddaughter. I call her my princess, though, to my mind, she beats any princess that I ever heard tell of." The stranger smiled very pleasantly, and seemed about to speak; but Mr. Sykes and Mr. Higginbottom coming in, made an interruption. The gentlemen had all seen each other previously that morning; so after a slight nod to Marian, with "Miss Withers, how are you to-day?" the new comers began a conversation of their own about the state of the Manchester market on the previous day, and the probable rise in cotton twist of a farthing per pound.

Mr. Sykes and Mr. Higginbottom were both master spinners, and had risen from operatives to be the owners of the largest mills in the neighbourhood. Mr. Higginbottom was a large, jovial-looking man, with the face of a satyr; but there was a character of strength and intellect about the head which redeemed its sensuality. His companion had a broad face, marked with small-pox, and of a deadly pallor; his growth seemed to have been stunted from hardship and overwork in his childhood,—which, indeed, was the case; but he had sharp, intelligent, gray eyes, and a head that seemed bound with sinews of iron and steel. John Withers and the two Methodist preachers entering soon after, completed the party. The two preachers bore that indescribable family likeness to each other which is seen in all the portraits in religious maga-

zines; a sort of stereotyped mildness, as if the unruly elements of their human nature had been frozen over with iced sugar; and the British lion within them seemed to have been fed on nothing but farinaceous food. They were in strange contrast to the strong, practical-looking men around them, and soon fell back upon a whispered dialogue between themselves about the amount of the collection at the missionary-sermon on the previous Sabbath. One of them, addressing Marian with great urbanity, inquired after all her little brothers and sisters,—the one question with which he always broke ground when he attempted conversation with young people. Marian answering that she had none, he was obliged to think of something else, and before he had succeeded, Mrs. Wilcox, in her best cap and black silk gown, followed

by Aunt Alice, entered, with the news that dinner was quite ready. The guests were hungry, and so long as the dinner was good they were not particular about the appointments of the table; so that, although there was no change of knives and forks, and there occurred an interregnum after the meat was removed, during which the plates had to be washed and brought back for the pudding, yet, on the whole, the dinner went off very well. Marian's custards were pronounced excellent, and Mr. Wilcox expressed a wish that Aunt Alice "would teach his old woman how to make such first-rate pie-crust."

After the cloth had been withdrawn, Mr. Wilcox produced a sheaf of clean pipes and some choice tobacco. There was a bottle of strong port wine for those who liked it, but most of the guests

preferred Hollands and water. The ladies were at liberty to remain or depart as they pleased, but Mrs. Wilcox, having entered into an engrossing conversation with one of the preachers on the subject of a "revival" that was expected to take place shortly, was not disposed to move; so Aunt Alice placidly took out her knitting, and Marian sat with enforced patience, wondering when it would be time to go home.

The conversation turned upon the joint-stock companies, which were then the ruling mania of the day.

"I have no faith in them," said John Withers; "they are all just schemes for making everybody rich without working; they have taken the place of the lotteries, where everybody hoped by putting a bit of paper into the wheel to see it come out the ten thousand-pound prize at least. It

is a bad look-out for a country when the people of it take the notion of getting rich in a hurry; it is trying to cheat nature into working miracles, and getting things without paying the price for them. It may seem to answer for a while; but pay-day will come at last, and find them out, like the day of judgment, when they least look for it. There is nothing but hard work that does not deceive a man; if he sticks to that, he finds the good of it in the end, though his back may be half broken before it comes.

"Ay, that's true enough, Mr. Withers," said Higginbottom. "The worst thing in these joint-stock companies is that the shareholders lose all thought of working themselves, but trust to the directors juggling with their money, so as to make two and two into five, whilst the directors, though perhaps they may none of them be

rascals on their own account, yet when they all come to act together, their conscience evaporates, for one gives in to another; one is squeamish in this, while the other is squeamish in that, so that any kind of rascality gets done amongst them; and i they are called to account, there's the 'Board' to come upon, which is just like trying to catch 'Nobody,'—who, along with the Cat, has done all the mischief since the world began. I, for my part, can see no good in going partners with all the world; I am just for a fair stand-up fight in business, each of us to fend for ourselves: 'a fair field and no favour;' this is my motto."

"Whenever there has been a spell of good trade," said Mr. Sykes, "there always comes up a crop of new schemes for making everybody rich in no time. One while it's one thing, and another while it's another thing. Why, now, when I was a

lad, there were those canals, and what were not they to do? The whole country was to be cut up, like the Dutchman's, from end to side; instead of coaches we were to go about in flat-bottomed boats, and the women to skate to market in winter. Well, and what did it all come to? Why, after ruining all the people who trusted to them, a bad harvest and a bad trade brought things to pretty much where they were before; for when there's a bad harvest, a bad trade and low wages are sure to follow, and *vice versâ*. I remember the time that followed the canal mania; the master my father worked with, failed along of his canal shares; he had put his hand out farther than he could draw it back; the mill stopped, and two hundred hands were thrown out of employ in a minute. It was a sore time for us little 'uns. Mother had always been proud

of her house, and kept nice furniture. We had an eight-day clock, I remember, that set her up more than anything else; but when the children got up in a morning, and there was nothing on the loaf to give them, it was easier parting with the things than to hear them cry. The brokers' shops were all full of things, and they would lend next to nothing. The harvest was shocking bad just then; in some places the corn stood on the ground till snow came, and what was got in was not fit for Christian use. Even after the bread was baked, it was like soft pudding, that you might eat with a spoon, and had an awful bad taste. I mind one day that my mother, after pawning a pair of blankets, went to the baker's for a loaf, and as she was coming home, she dropped it out of her apron, and it broke like a tea-cup, and before she could pick it up all the inside had run out like fair dough. I would not

have believed it if I had not seen it. Everybody was in distress; the farmers were being sold up everywhere, and you may think how poor people were pinched. My father could get no work, and we all went to the workhouse. It fair broke my mother's heart, and she never held up her head after. I was sent, along with some others, to Burton-upon-Trent, to learn cotton-spinning under old Sir Robert Peel. I was there a long while; my father died during the time, and what became of my brother I never could rightly tell. The parish had sent him to sea, and I suppose he must have been drowned in foreign parts, for his ship was never heard of. I got into work at Oldham, and I determined to raise up the family like; I recollect thinking what a proud day it would be for me if I could get back my mother's eight-day clock. So I scraped and saved, and I worked early and

I worked late; I lived—and lived as well as I could—on three shillings a-week, and saved the rest. It's wonderful what may be got together by saving! Trade was brisk and wages were good; and when I had got a few pounds together, I bought a couple of looms and put them up in a cellar, and I got a boy to work under me, and made some pieces for myself; and I put them in a bag and took them round to sell. Well, from little to much, I got on. A chap came to me one day, and asked me to be overlooker to one of his mills. You see I had a good bit of money laid up at that time, that nobody knew on. So we fell to talking. He wanted to extend his business; but he wanted capital too. He was a sharp fellow, and knew what he was about; so the upshot of it was, that we agreed to go into partnership, and when he died I had the concern to myself, and am

where you see me now. But I never tried no way to get rich all of a sudden, and I never will try; for them schemes only take the work out of a man, and make him a coward like. I have been in straits since I was a master and when I was a man, and it's the *work* that has kept my heart up; and I mind what my old father used to say in his troubles,—he had seen it on a tombstone,—'Good times, and bad times, all times pass by.'" Mr. Sykes emptied the ashes from his pipe, and filling it afresh, began to smoke in silence.

"Ay," said Mr. Higginbottom, "that just goes to prove my maxim, that nobody can fend for a man as a man can fend for himself; he must take care of number one if number one is to be taken care of at all."

"Undoubtedly," said Mr. Cunningham, who had been listening with much interest, although he had not yet spoken. "A spirit

of self-help does lie at the bottom of all success. Self-reliance is the back-bone of all heroism of character. The spirit to work thoroughly at whatever has to be done, to grapple hand to hand with difficulties, and strangle them, instead of seeking to evade them, is the primeval stuff out of which men and demigods are made. But we must beware how we allow our views to centre in ourselves. We are none of us alone in the world, it is not for ourselves alone that we work and strive. Man does much by himself, but all great objects have been attained when he has joined himself with others and worked in concert with them. Vicious as the working, and as the effects of some of these joint-stock companies may be, still they contain a principle that will gradually re-organise the whole machinery of society. Co-operation will gradually take the place of

competition. A great social question is opening up. The enormous development of our material and industrial interests has created a new order of men in this country, and indeed throughout Europe. The practical republicanism of trade has induced an entirely new range of thoughts and interests of which our fathers never dreamed. The resources of trade have, however, hitherto been like a rich and newly-discovered land, where any new comer has been at liberty to work for his own advantage in any way he chose. Complicated questions of conflicting interests are arising. Masters and men, capital and labour, are beginning to stand in antagonism to each other. It is an immense question that is lying before us. There will be a struggle, the end of which none of us may live to see, but I believe firmly, that the true laws of commerce will

be laid down, and that labour will be organized and its forces disciplined, so that their peaceful exploits will be more extended and brilliant than those achieved by war and destruction. Side by side with this growing ANTAGONISM of interests, there is arising the idea of ASSOCIATION, which will mature and develop itself gradually, till, in the fulness of time, it will have strength to gather together the conflicting interests into one."

Mrs. Wilcox, who had finished her conversation about the "revival," and about the last class-meeting, now became anxious about tea, and whether "that stupid girl had had the sense to put on the kettle." She arose to ascertain the state of things in the back kitchen. Mr. Wilcox proposed to the gentlemen to take a stroll, which was agreed to. He called to Marian, who was following Aunt Alice out of the room,

"Marian, lass, thou shalt go along with us. I want thee to see the new buildings. Make haste and put on thy bonnet, and we will wait for thee."

Marian was only too glad to escape from the reeking atmosphere into the fresh air; besides she hoped that Mr. Cunningham would continue the conversation. When she returned, the rest had walked on, Mr. Cunningham only remaining to escort her. He offered his arm to Marian, and they proceeded towards the mill.

CHAPTER II.

THE INTERIOR OF A COTTON MILL.

MARIAN and Mr. Cunningham followed the party, who had proceeded in the direction of the mill.

"I should think that all this must be very stupid to you," said Marian.

"And why should you think so?"

"Because, though Mr. Wilcox and Mr. Sykes may be very good in their way, they are coarse and vulgar, and destitute of all education or refinement. They have not an idea beyond their mills."

"Are you not losing sight of the essential in the accidental? These are men whose heart is in their work, and who 'do with all their might whatever their hand findeth to do,' gravely and steadily, without looking to the right or the left; they are undeterred by difficulty, unwearied with labour, and I take it that the power to persist in a course of work is about the highest quality a man can possess. You say these men want education and refinement—granted; so much the more imperative is it upon those who possess both, to endeavour to civilise and enlighten them, that their immense force and activity may not become the mere force and ferocity of beasts of prey; they must be purified from the cupidity of greedily and blindly following their individual interest. These men have only recently emerged from the depths of privation and poverty — they have obtained

wealth for themselves, and the power of increasing it to an unlimited degree—they are full of savage and vigorous life, like that with which the barbarians regenerated the old world, when Roman civilisation had run to seed. These men have the old barbaric strength of undisciplined life; they need educating, they need civilising; but they will change the face of the world. The *prestige* of idleness has already begun to disappear. The splendour of military glory has begun to fade; the exploits of peaceful industry are every day becoming more honourable, and they will shine brighter and brighter in proportion as men are able to discern high and noble aims, and to look to something higher than their own individual gain and loss. The reason why military exploits have preserved their glory unquenched amid so many centuries of bloodshed, tears, and desolation is, that

each soldier carried within him the idea that he was not fighting for any personal advantage or recompense, but for some supposed glorious object, which would redound to the everlasting credit of the 'armies of his country.' Some spark of generous chivalry must be kindled in the bosom of the peaceful soldiers of commerce, if their immense resources and their Titan-like endowments are to achieve works worthy of them, and not to be desecrated to mere purposes of personal gain. These men, whom you are tempted to despise for their uncouthness, are a mine full of unknown riches, to be worked in patience and hope, and developed in the good time of Him 'who governs the world according to the good pleasure of His will.'"

Marian made no reply for the moment; she did not understand what Mr. Cunningham meant, and she thought that if he had

to live amongst the people around her, he would find them as disagreeable as she did herself. After a pause, she said:

"Ah, it is a new world to you, and you can go away when you are tired of it; but if you knew how much I thirst for the society of those who are more refined and educated, you would not wonder at my want of sympathy with these people."

Mr. Cunningham looked down upon her with a smile.

"Be assured," said he, "that whatever is really good and desirable for you is already on its way towards you, and will find you out through whatever obstructions may seem to surround you."

"I wish I could believe such a beautiful doctrine," said Marian, smiling.

"If we keep ourselves quiet where our lot has been cast, and do the duties appointed to us, we shall find that things seek us in a

wonderful manner: it is when we go out of our way to seek them that we miss what we would most desire to find, or, finding the letter of our hopes, we miss the spirit."

The rest of the party had gone to the top of a hill in a neighbouring field, and were now seen retracing their steps towards them.

"Why Marian," said Mr. Wilcox, "I thought thou hadst lost thy way. If Mr. Cunningham here had not been an old fellow, I should have said thou hadst been doing a bit of courting by the road."

Marian looked furious, but Mr. Wilcox laughed.

"Come along, lass, and do not spoil that pretty face of thine; there was no harm meant."

"Now Mr. Cunningham, sir, if you come this way, you shall see a sight that would

do any man's heart good, if he were the king himself."

He led the party a few yards further, and in a hollow, beside a stream of water, stood the mill, which was the pride of Mr. Wilcox's heart, at the foot of a broad meadow-like hill, which gently sloped above it. Groups of work-people were scattered about; some were sitting down, soberly drinking tea with their wives out of tin cans, and eating huge slices of thick bread and butter; boys of all ages, from ten to sixteen, some in shirt-sleeves, and some in fustian jackets, were racing or playing at football. Groups of girls, screaming and laughing, playing practical jokes on each other, or exchanging sharp, saucy words with the young fellows who were teasing them; sometimes coquetting, and at others bestowing a smart thump on the youths to make them keep their distance,

or to encourage them to retaliate, as the case might be. Other groups of the factory girls, in their cotton bedgowns and black petticoats, with their glossy hair arranged in a classical-looking knot at the back of their head, most of them wearing a string of glass or coral beads round her neck, and a pair of gilt drop ear-rings, were scattered up and down, walking two or three together, with their arms round each other's waists, telling their secrets like young ladies of a higher grade. Altogether, it was a scene of noisy, swarming life, and Mr. Wilcox contemplated it with evident satisfaction.

"You see," said he, turning to Mr. Cunningham, "the mill has loosed for half-an-hour—it is 'bagging' time, and the young 'uns are more for playing than eating. Hey! I like to see 'em; those little lads are perfect imps of mischief. It is fun to

see 'em when they have got into a fight, and are tearing away like good 'uns—the factory-bell rings, and they dare not but mind it—they are like to leave off and run for their lives, and finish it out another day! I have laughed many a time to see how sharp the bell makes them come to again, no matter how hard they have been punching each other the minute before! This bit of playtime, whilst the mill has stopped, carries them on bravely to the end of the day; they work all the better for it, so I lose nothing for giving them ten minutes more than usual."

"That is just one of your notions," said Mr. Higginbottom. "What's the use of turning their head with playing and sweethearting in the middle of their work? I'll tell you what it is,—it is just as folks are brought up. When I was a child we none of us had no play, and we did not

look for it; we were told if we did not work we should clem, and I warrant you that made us sharp enough."

"Ay, you are as hard as a door-nail—we all know that, and you make your folks work terrible long hours. If it came to a strike, I don't think there is a man of mine that would leave me; they all know I give them the best wages I can afford, and they have reason like other folk."

This was a sore subject to Mr. Higginbottom, who was noted for being a hard man, getting the greatest possible amount of work for the lowest possible wages. He took no thought or interest in his work-people after they left his mill; he paid them their wages on Saturday night, and they might be ill or well, drunken or sober, as they pleased. If they did not come to their work they were scratched off the

books, and no excuse asked or taken. His mill was old and dirty, for he would go to no expense, nor make the machinery safe for the work-people; it was all left open and unguarded, and accidents were frequent; he even used old ropes for the hoists which conveyed goods from storey to storey. He made money, and he saved money, and he was a rich man; but his mill had been set on fire more than once,—his men were the most bitter and active members of the Trades' Union, they were discontented and disaffected, and hated their master, who had oftener than once narrowly escaped being shot by some of his own men during a strike for a dispute about wages.

The factory-bell now rung to recommence work, and there was great running and scuffling amongst the scattered groups to reach the mill before it ceased; and in

less than five minutes the people had settled steadily to their work.

Mr. Wilcox then conducted his visitors to a piece of waste-ground adjoining the mill-yard, where the new washhouses were already in a state of forwardness. He was very proud of them, the contrivances being all his own.

"Do not forget that you promised I should go through your mill," said Mr. Cunningham.

"Then let us go now," said Mr. Wilcox.

They entered a large room with a stone floor, on the basement storey, the noise and dust of which were almost intolerable. An immense stock of raw cotton lay piled in one corner nearly to the ceiling. A meagre-looking boy, whose hair was all covered with the cotton flue, as also his ragged shirt and fustian trousers, was putting the cotton into what appeared a deep box.

"You see," said Mr. Wilcox, addressing Mr. Cunningham, "the first thing we do at the cotton, is to cut open thirty or forty bags, and throw the cotton all in a heap together, like that," pointing to the stack in the corner, "and then it is put into this machine; its right name is a 'willow,' but we mostly call it a 'devil;' you shall see his teeth." The machine was stopped, and Mr. Wilcox showed Mr. Cunningham a barrel set all over with iron spikes, which revolved at a great speed in a sort of box.

"You see," said he, "when the cotton first comes out of the bags, it is all in hard matted lumps. The teeth of this here 'devil' catches them, and tears them up into fragments,—masticates them as it were. The cotton falls down on the other side of the box, and the lad has to look sharp and get it out, or else the 'devil' will be apt to catch hold of his hand too."

"It must be dangerous work," said Mr. Cunningham.

"Ay, we have awkward jobs sometimes; but you see the side of the box lets down, and they get into the way of doing it. The cotton that has come through the 'devil' is then put into what we call a 'scutcher,' to be cleaned. You see that boy is feeding it. The cotton passes through two beaters, and whilst being beaten these fans are blowing all the seeds and dust away, which is carried up those pipes, so that the cotton is now quite clean and open, and ready to be carded."

"Ah, Mr. Withers, I must change my 'scutching'-machine for one like yours. You are always making improvements. Why look here, Mr. Cunningham; it takes the time of several boys only to carry the cotton that comes from the 'scutcher' to

feed the 'cards;' but my neighbour has made his 'scutcher' do that work itself, for, by a simple contrivance, the cotton, instead of flying out loose, is made to pass between rollers, which smooth it out, and then it is lapped round another roller, like a roll of wadding. When there is enough to take to the card it is removed, and an empty roller put in its place. When the lap is put at the back of the carding-machine, it unrols itself, and the machine is supplied for a long time. Mr. Withers is a main clever chap, that's a fact."

Most of the workpeople in this room kept bits of cotton in their mouths to prevent the dust passing down their throats. But their pale, emaciated looks showed that, in spite of this precaution, it was an unhealthy branch of the occupation.

"You will hardly understand the carding-machine at first, Mr. Cunningham. But you may describe it as on the principle of a brush, set round with bristles before and behind, only instead of bristles the 'card' has fine short wires set in a leather back, and this is put round rollers. You see there are several rollers covered with these cards. The cotton which has come out of the 'scutcher' is placed at the back of the machine, and all goes between these rollers, by which means the fibres are laid one way and brushed smooth. Then, if you will come round here to the front, you will see how, just before the cotton is ready to come out, this 'drawing-box' draws it all into one band, which we call a 'sliver,' and it is received into this tall can. When a can is full, the girl who has charge of the machine breaks the 'sliver,' carries the

can away, and pops an empty one in its place."

Mr. Cunningham admired the long, snowy, fleecy band, falling so softly and rapidly into the can; and not less was he struck with the grave, silent attention each person gave to his own business, not even looking up when the visitors entered. No talking went on, chiefly, no doubt, because the noise of machinery drowned all attempts at hearing. Mr. Cunningham looked on with the curiosity of a stranger, to whom the process is a novelty. Mr. Sykes and Mr. Higginbottom regarded it with professional eyes, and pulled the cotton to examine the length of fibre; whilst Marian only thought the noise and heat were intolerable. She had often been through a cotton-mill before, and did not care for it.

"The next machine," said Mr. Wilcox,

"is very simple; we call it a 'drawing frame.' Six of these cans full of 'slivers' are put at the back of the frame, and the six 'slivers' going between these rollers are pressed into one; they are at the same time pulled out, so that the 'sliver' on this side is no thicker than any one of the six that went to make it—the difference is gone into the length. The next drawing-machine takes six of these, and draws them again in their turn into one. Every fibre is, you see, laid beautifully smooth and regular. As yet the 'sliver' has received no twist: that comes next. The 'slubbing and roving frames' give it the first step towards becoming a thread. See, this slubbing-frame twists the 'sliver' that is put into it, as well as draws it, and instead of falling into a can it is wound on a bobbin. The rest of these machines are all pretty much the same,

and by means of these little fluted rollers the thread is drawn out finer and finer, and gets twisted harder and harder. These are 'throstles;' see how quick the bobbins revolve—so quick you would almost fancy they stood still. The 'mules' are up-stairs—this way."

"What a difference," said Mr. Cunningham, "there is in the appearance of the workpeople. As the work becomes finer, the people engaged upon it look healthier, cleaner, and more intelligent. What a contrast these people present to the miserable-looking children employed at the 'devil.'"

"Ay," said Mr. Wilcox, "clean work needs clean folk to do it, and these machines run so quick that they have need to look so much sharper about them."

"I hope," said John Withers, "to see the day when machinery will be brought

to such perfection that it will do all the drudgery of work that is not fit for human beings, and thus the workman will only need to give the intellect. The more a machine can be made to do, the more the character and position of the workman is raised; and every invention that goes to perfect machinery improves the condition of the working-classes at the same time. Though at first it may seem to deprive them of some branches of employment, yet eventually it brings more hands into work, for the more we produce the cheaper the goods will be, and the cheaper goods are, the greater the demand for them, and of course more plentiful the supply. Improvement in machinery will not only lighten labour, but shorten the hours of work, and the people will have time to improve themselves, and become something better than drudges.

But poor people are just yet very ignorant, and cannot see. What you are looking at to-day, and thinking so beautiful, was looked upon, when the improvements first came out, with perfect hatred from the work-people. I have seen machinery escorted to the mill by armed soldiers; and if the people could have laid hands on the inventor, he would have stood a poor chance amongst them; they would have torn him to pieces. I have had to look to myself before now, even with my little inventions; they have got me much ill-will, but my workpeople are getting to understand things better now, and to see their own interest."

"Perhaps so," said Mr. Wilcox; "but now look here, I can show you some 'mules' I have just set up. The day will never come when you can improve on them, I think. That pair contains three

hundred and fifty spindles—what do you say to that?"

"I think it is very good," said Mr. Withers. Even the imagination of John Withers did not reach to a self-acting mule of the present day, with its 1,500 spindles! The miracles of one age are the every-day occurrences of another.

"These 'mules,' you see, Mr. Cunningham, only repeat the process we saw down-stairs, drawing the thread out so much finer. The thread is here wound into 'cops,' and goes from here to the weaver's shuttle for weft."

Here Marian, who had quite come to the end of her patience, suggested that Mrs. Wilcox would be waiting tea for them.

"Well," said John Withers, "if Mr. Cunningham will dine with me to-morrow, I will show him all the remaining process

of winding, warping, and weaving, for I am sure he has seen as much as he can carry away for one day."

As they went out, Mr. Wilcox showed them a room which he had fitted up for the women, where they might hang their bonnets and shawls upon pegs appropriated to each of them. There was a supply of water, and plenty of towels and soap; sundry cheap looking-glasses also were suspended against the walls.

"You see the lasses like to smarten themselves up a bit," said he, "and I like to encourage them; they work all the better for respecting themselves. My maxim is, that 'cleanliness is next to godliness,' and you see I have had it written up before their eyes, not in letters of gold exactly, though it deserves it, but in good large print, at any rate. It is certain that a man will hold up his

head when he is clean washed and shaved, and scorn to do many a thing he might give into when he is in his dirt. I cannot abide to see a man on a Sunday hanging against his door-post with a pipe in his mouth, all unshaved, and maybe in the same shirt he has wore all the week. I always tell him of it,—for depend upon it dirt makes a man brutal, in the long run. If he leaves off attending to himself like a Christian, all his character will run to seed. I have seen it so, often and often."

"You will make all your workpeople too 'nesh' for anything," said Mr. Higginbottom. "What have they to do with dressing themselves before looking-glasses —what have poor folks to do with baths and such nonsense? Keep them hard at work, if they must keep out of mischief. You will turn them into gentlefolks, and

the end will be they will be helping themselves to our places."

"It may be all very well," said Mr. Sykes, "to encourage cleanliness and all that, but I do not think they should be encouraged to go fine; they have more need to be taught to save their money, and not to spend it. Now I would like to see habits of saving and frugality amongst them. I would like to see them lay by a penny against a rainy day. It is no good for trade to be brisk and for the people to get good wages, if they spend their money as fast as they get it. Why, there's no end to their waste and extravagance. There are men who earn their eighteen, twenty, and two-and twenty shillings a week, who, instead of putting anything by, or even clothing their children decently, let them run about barefoot, and

yet sit down to a Sunday dinner fit for a lord."

"It is a pity," said Mr. Wilcox, "but that their wives were a little more managing; they are a sad feckless set, and can do nothing gradely but their mill-work. The man and the woman come home at night, and maybe the key in their pocket, and no fire, no light, no nothing inside the doors; and what is worse, the wife is tired to death, and does not know how to do a hand's turn to make things comfortable. The money goes no way, because they neither know how to save nor how to spend."

"For my part," said Mr. Sykes, "I have often thought that when a woman begins to have children, she ought to stop at home and mind them, poor little things; it makes my heart sore to see how they

are neglected. A babby lugged about by a child hardly bigger than itself; or two or three little 'uns left to play all day in the gutters and learn all manner of mischief; or maybe locked up in a room under the care of a child hardly old enough to take care of itself, and they play with the bit of fire and get burned to death, or drink out of the hot tea-kettle. If some of the children are big enough to go to the factory, then if there is a babby it is left to a woman to tend, who keeps it still with some cordial or other devilment, if she don't give it something worse in the shape of downright gin."

"Ay," said Mr. Wilcox, "you are right there, sir; if masters would make a rule never to employ married women, it would put a stop to many an improvident marriage, and force the lads and lasses, too,

to think twice of what they were after. Why look you, now, a lad of nineteen or twenty will keep company with a girl, and say, I am getting so and so—fifteen or twenty shillings, as the case may be: how much art thou getting, Sal? And she will say, maybe ten, maybe twelve; and then they add up, that fifteen and ten come to twenty-five; and they will go and get married, though neither know more of housekeeping than a cat,—and then children come; they will either live or die: if they live, they will earn money for their parents; and if they die, there are the burial-clubs. And as to breeding them and teaching them, they don't think of it; and it is a shame things should be this way."

"It seems to me," said Mr. Cunningham, "that even in a mere worldly point of view, it would be better for them if the married women staid at home to mind

the house and bring up the children. Though they might have earned nothing, yet at the week's end, they would have saved more than the worth of their wages in comfort, and the money brought home by their husbands would go further, and say nothing of the superior education and intelligence of the children: what can they be but poor little savages,—a 'lower order,' in every sense of the term?"

"You would find it hard work to convince them of this, sir," said Mr. Sykes.

"And more's the shame if he could," said Mr. Higginbottom. "Poor folks must be poor folks, and work if they are to be kept honest. If you once give them time to idle, or make them too comfortable, they will get above their places, and think no end of theirselves; and what's the odds if they do get drunk now and then? —the best workmen are always drunken."

"The more I look into the state of the work-people," said John Withers, "the more I am convinced that till they are educated they will have no more sense than so many children."

"What will the world come to next?" said Mr. Higginbottom, "Educate them! Teach 'em reading and writing that they may turn radicals, politicians, and trades' union demagogues! I am not over and above religious myself, but I have more than that comes to, at any rate."

"Do you not think," said one of the Methodist preachers, "that every man ought to be able to read his Bible?"

"Read their Bibles! I tell you, sir, they will not be content with reading their Bibles; they will read newspapers—low, radical, seditious immorality. If they want to learn their duty, they may go to Church; don't we pay the parsons wages

to teach them. But I would throw any man out of the window, pretty sharply, who came canting to me about educating the people."

"And if I were a parliament-man," said John Withers, sturdily, "I would try to get a law made to compel every man to make his children go to school before he could send them to work."

"And you call yourself a free-born Briton!" said Mr. Higginbottom, contemptuously.

"Come, come, lads," interposed Mr. Wilcox, "let us leave talk, and go back to the house; the missus will have the kettle boiled by this time."

They returned through the village, which was chiefly occupied by the workmen of Mr. Wilcox. The houses were built of rough gray stone; most of them had gardens attached, the borders of which

were neatly edged with slates or oyster-shells. Some of the cottages were weather-beaten and moss-grown, with porches before the door, whitewashed within. A curious vegetation of house-leeks and grass grew amongst the tiles of the roof; gilly-flowers and daisies grew in straggling patches out of the crevices of the low garden walls; whilst an old damson or pear-tree, with patches of white, scaly moss upon the trunk, overshadowed these olden cottages; and the bright diamond window panes blinked in the sunshine. These places were generally inhabited by old people, who took no share in the mill, and had indeed lived there long before any mills were built in the neighbourhood. It might be that their children or grandchildren were some of the "new-fangled workers," but they themselves cultivated their garden, and were

helped on by a small allowance from the parish.

The village was scattered up and down broken ground—round green hills swelled above in all directions, some of them covered with corn-fields, already beginning to turn white; whilst in others the hay-makers were busy amongst the long rich grass. The invasion of the mills had not yet destroyed the rural aspect of the neighbourhood.

When they reached the house, they found Mrs. Wilcox in her tea-room, sitting behind her gaudy red and gold tea-things. The table was covered with an ample supply of potato-cakes, a large currant loaf, and a plate piled with crumpets swimming with butter.

After tea Mr. Wilcox ordered pipes and hot water into the room where they had dined, and the gentlemen adjourned to

solace themselves, leaving the ladies to make agreeable conversation as well as they could.

At length Aunt Alice began to think it grew late; and resisting all entreaties to stay for a "bit of supper," she desired Marian to put on her bonnet,—to whose extreme delight they soon afterwards found themselves on their road home, but not till she had heard her father invite Mr. Cunningham to come to see his mill and dine with them the next day.

"Well, we have had a very nice friendly day," said Aunt Alice; "I have knitted nearly a half-dozen squares for my coverlet. I shall soon get it finished if we go visiting at this rate."

Knitting this coverlet had been Aunt Alice's "company work" for a long time. She never allowed herself to touch it except when she went out to drink tea. It

was to consist, when finished, of diagonal pieces knitted in various patterns, and she in her own mind designed it as a present to her darling Marian when she should be married.

"Dear father! who is Mr. Cunningham?" asked Marian.

"Why, I don't rightly know; but he is a very clever fellow, and has travelled a great deal, and he takes an interest in manufactures, and is curious about the work-people. My idea is that he intends to go to Parliament, and is qualifying himself to stand for this part of the county. He is a sensible fellow, and he means well. I don't know when I ever heard a man speak more to my mind. He seems to say things I have wanted to say myself, but did not rightly know how."

CHAPTER III.

ROMANCE AND REALITY.

Some accidental circumstance prevented Mr. Cunningham keeping his appointment. John Withers began to look grave and preoccupied;—Aunt Alice watched him anxiously, but said nothing. A week had nearly elapsed since their visit to Mrs. Wilcox, during which time Marian had become more dissatisfied than ever with her home and environments; she felt as if she had become herself a partaker in the coarseness and uncongeniality of the

people she was compelled to come into contact with. The brief glimpse she had obtained of cultivated society only made her privation of it more intolerable. She was depressed and wretched, and all the more because there was no one near her to whom her complaints would not have seemed unreasonable. She felt a sick despair, like one condemned to everlasting imprisonment, when she reflected that there was no prospect that she could ever obtain an entrance into the society she yearned after,—there was no probability that her mode of life would ever be different to what it now was.

Refined, fastidious, and discontented, she confined herself nearly entirely to her own room, which, since her return from Carrisford, she had endeavoured to model somewhat in accordance with the indefinite yearning that devoured her to be sur-

rounded by things refined and tasteful. Her means were limited; still, by dint of ingenuity, she had contrived to give her apartment an air of lightness and freshness that covered the absence of more luxurious appointments. The heavy moreen curtains had been removed, and their place supplied with snowy white dimity. The toilet-table and looking-glass, by the aid of some pink calico and white muslin, looked quite beautiful. She had recovered from the wash-house a certain old black oak table with twisted legs, and covered it with a piece of rich brocade silk,—part of the wedding suit of some stately great-grandmother, which had descended to Aunt Alice, along with many other similar relics, from her deceased mistress.

Aunt Alice had old-fashioned prejudices against a bedroom being used for any pur-

pose but to sleep in, and at first made many objections to Marian's fancy for turning hers into a sitting-room. Upon this table Marian had placed her writing-desk, Hilda's work-basket, and an old china jar full of flowers. She had turned a packing-case into an ottoman, and covered it with some chintz. What books she possessed were on a set of shelves which hung against the wall, and over the chimney-piece was a print of Bartolozzi's, representing a very beautiful woman leaning against a broken pillar. The room had two windows, one a small casement, which did not open, placed in the thickness of the wall; the other was a sash-window, looking out to the front of the house, and commanding a view of the opening amongst the hills, giving a glimpse of an extensive meadow land with a river gliding through it, and a flock of sheep and cattle grazing lazily

here and there. This outlook was to Marian like the loop-hole in a captive's cell. There, like a broad riband, wound the high road to Manchester; and beyond Manchester lay — Carrisford! Here she spent most of her time—nursing her fastidiousness and melancholy, as so many proofs of her superiority to everything around. In youth people can afford to be miserable; there is a certain luxury in being wilfully sad—a contrast to the exuberant unexplored fountain of health and life which wells up within us, and which often sends a gush of delight through our souls from the mere "glad animal instinct," of life. As we grow older we affect mirth as we then affected sadness, and are very thankful to stow away our sorrows out of sight, and to forget them awhile if possible. The young are apt to think it is something dignified and dis-

tinguished to be unhappy, and that carries them through a great deal.

There was a cushion all along the window seat, and here she generally sat,—sometimes musing, sometimes working at a cushion which she was embroidering as a present to Hilda upon her marriage.

It was the Monday morning two days after her visit to Borrow Clough, she made her escape directly after breakfast, leaving to her aunt all the care of attending to the affairs of the house, and the responsibility of being prepared for Mr. Cunningham who was again expected to dinner. She flung herself into the window seat, gazing through the open window across to the opening amongst the hills. It was a glorious summer morning. The air quivered with heat, and all was so still that the very silence seemed to have a sound. A faint perfume came up at intervals from

the jessamines and roses which climbed as high as the window. Her heart was oppressed with a vague sorrow: it was the home-sickness of the soul, which she could not have translated into absolute wishes, but she was all the more unhappy for the indefiniteness of her desires.

After a while she began to build castles in the air, which gradually became airier and brighter, till some of them were fit for the dwelling of the fairy Morgana herself. She pictured to herself Albert coming along that road, seen in the distance, arriving at the house; all the joy, the surprise, all he might say. She pictured the impression he would make upon her father, upon Aunt Alice. She invented what they would say; her own happy conscious embarrassment, and her endeavours to make all parties pleased with each other. It became so real, that when

she was recalled to herself by the entrance of Aunt Alice, who came to beg she would come and give her assistance down stairs, Marian roused herself with a start; the temporary excitement she had felt was all gone, and she fell with a more painful, unelastic weight back into the Slough of Despond, where she had so long struggled.

"Come, come, my lass, move a bit sharper. Why have you not been out to fetch a walk this fine morning, instead of dawdling over nothing at all. Really you young girls are enough for to weary Providence, by the way you go on wasting all the good health, and strength, and time He has given you. Just ask thyself, who is one bit the better for all thou hast done this last month? Dost thou know, I begin to fear that something will be sent to fret thee in earnest if thou goes on this rate, discontented and repining at 'the state of life

to which thou art called,' as the catechism says."

"Well, aunt, what is it I am to do?"

"Just see to laying the cloth first, and then I will find thee another job, never fear; but do that first."

Marian obeyed, but with a feeling of dislike and disgust she only half concealed.

Marian had more than once attempted to arrange the little sitting-room more in accordance with her own notions of good taste, but Aunt Alice had been so distressed when the chairs were removed from their traditional places, and she had looked so pained when Marian had proposed to banish the large japan tea-tray into the kitchen from where it stood in all its majesty reared against the wall, that she could not find it in her heart to insist, and she abandoned her reforms, leaving the gray quaker grass and peacocks' feathers behind the little looking-

glass, which projected forwards over the chimney-piece. She finished her business, and was leaving the room, when her father entered, but unaccompanied by Mr. Cunningham. He looked grave and anxious, and inquired, in an absent manner, if dinner would be long, and seated himself, putting his hands in his waistcoat-pocket, and keeping his hat on. Aunt Alice now came in.

"Are you going to dine without Mr. Cunningham?"

"He sent word he could not come, so let us have dinner whilst we have got one to eat."

John Withers sat down at table, but he eat in the same silent, absent manner.

Aunt Alice endeavoured to converse cheerfully on various matters, but she could obtain no reply.

At length she ventured to say, "Have

you heard any bad news this morning, or are you ill? You don't look right."

"Yes, I am well enough; what should ail me? But I reckon I must be off to Manchester by the coach after dinner."

"Then you won't be home to-night? It is a sudden thought, isn't it?"

John Withers looked impatient, and Aunt Alice made no further observation, but set about packing his carpet-bag. Just when he was ready to go, Marian came to him with a morsel of floss silk pinned to a paper.

"Dear father, if you go near St. Mary's Gate, will you get me some silk to match this? it is close to the Exchange, and will not hinder you a moment, and I am in great distress for want of it."

"What dost thou mean by talking of 'distress,' girl? dost thou know what it means? I cannot bear to hear young

lasses use such words; it does not sound well."

"Young lasses don't think before they speak," said Aunt Alice. "It was only her way of saying it; but, Marian, don't plague thy father now; may be he has enough to think at."

John Withers departed for Manchester, Marian returned to her worsted work and the indulgence of her own thoughts, and Aunt Alice sat sadly down to a basket of stocking-mending, anxiously wondering what it was that John Withers had on his mind.

CHAPTER IV.

REALITY.

JOHN WITHERS had that morning heard tidings that things were not looking well in Manchester. A house with which he had dealings was reported to have failed for a large amount, and one of the partners, it was said, had absconded with property to a large amount in his possession. John Withers did not lose a moment in setting off to Manchester to know the worst.

It was eight o'clock when the coach

got in; nothing could be done that night. As he walked up the street he saw one of his customers standing with his hands in his pockets at the door of the "White Horse," in Hanging Ditch. He was a stout man, with a round cheerful face that did not look as though it belonged to a teetotaler. He was a man who prided himself on knowing all the news of the town.

"Ah! Mr. Withers, and how do you do, and what brings you here at this time o' day? Come in a bit, and tell us how things are going in your parts."

They went in together, and calling for brandy-and-water and pipes, they sat down in a distant part of the commercial room. For some minutes they smoked in silence, at length Mr. Brown said,

"Have you heard that Sandfords' have stopped? It will be a bad job. Milbank,

the other partner, has got safe off to America with ten thousand pounds. It may be more or it may be less; I'll not say for certain, but any way it is not far short. That is not the worst of it: he has been director of one of the joint-stock banks, and contrived to borrow, first and last, fifty thousand pounds, for which the firm is liable, though not one penny of it was ever transferred to the concern. It will be a bad job, and they say old Sandford has fairly gone out of his head about it. There is no saying how long he has gone on, he must have been at the game many years. They ought to have stopped long since: they have not been solvent for the last six years." Mr. Brown ceased to speak, and smoked with emphasis for some minutes.

John Withers was sick at heart; it was no more than he had expected to hear

and yet he felt that sudden prostration of all vitality as though he were melting away, which is the physical shape that evil tidings sometimes take; still, he did not betray any emotion, and the clouds of smoke befriended him. At last he said quietly,

"It is a bad job sure enough, but old Sandford is rich, is he not?"

"Ay, so folks say, but it will take a deal of brass to make things square: you see they have been going on so long. Are you in with them for anything?"

"A trifle, perhaps; but how is the money gone? Was Milbank an extravagant man?"

"You may say that, sir. He carried on the glory at a great rate, living in a grand house, and no end of livery servants, giving grand dinners, and taking the chair at all the missionary meetings

and Bible meetings for miles round. He was trustee to ever so many charities, and treasurer to two or three charitable institutions. I live near his place, and have heard great tales of his goings on. When he lighted up his house for company, which he was always having, it cost him sixty pounds a night for the lights alone! There was extravagance for you! He was director to one of these new mining companies, and gambled in shares, and that is how half the money has been sunk. Things are looking very bad in Manchester: people have been mad. They could not make money nor spend it fast enough, and now there will come a crash; and, mark my words, folks will go who seemed the firmest, and whom nobody would have expected to go. Ah! we live in a strange world!"

Mr. Brown drank off the remainder of

his tumbler, which, by the way, had been replenished oftener than once.

John Withers rose to go, but the other pulled him back.

"Nay, sit ye down man. We don't meet so often; let us be comfortable a bit longer, and then we will go together. Ay, sir, as I was saying, these joint-stock companies have played the hang-ment with people. There is hardly a house in the town but is involved more or less; but I saw how things would be long since, and I am all right. Mr. Withers, sir, I respect you; I do more, I like you, and if ever you are in want of assistance, sir, come to me, and I will stand by you. I have known you these fourteen years, and I am proud to know you, for an honester man never breathed."

Mr. Brown was evidently fast progressing towards the affectionate stage

of intoxication, and John Withers, tortured as he was with anxiety, had no more patience to listen to him; besides, he had no wish to have to take him home. A friend of Brown's luckily entered at this juncture, and John Withers made his escape.

He went to bed, but sleep did not visit him; ruin in all shapes stared him in the face. All his liabilities and embarrassments came before him with the fantastic exaggeration in which a sleepless night presents all objects.

The sudden squall in the commercial world came at a time when he was singularly ill-prepared to meet it. He had recently gone to great expense for new machinery, and a new patent he had taken out for improvements in the scutching machine, had taken up a great deal of ready money.

In the expectation that there would be a rise in the cotton market he had bought largely, and several heavy bills were coming due; still, if this house could only stand firm and settle their account with him for cloth delivered, he might yet pull through, but if it should fail, all the toil of so many years patient industry would be wasted, and his small venture in life would be utterly wrecked. He would be worse off than when, as a poor youth, he worked in his garret. He had then no interest at stake but his own—now his responsibilities were heavy. If he failed, four hundred hands would be thrown out of employment, and his failur would moreover entail the failure of several others who had done business with him.

John Withers had earned such a character for prudence, integrity, and caution,

that he stood high on 'Change, and the idea of forfeiting this esteem and becoming a defaulter, was too painful to be endured.

No old Castilian noble ever felt more jealous of the honour of his house than did John Withers of his commercial credit. To owe more money than he could pay was a degradation too dreadful to contemplate. His courage and endurance, which had supported him under the sharpest privations, would not help him under the loss of his good name.

He did not close his eyes the whole night, and there were moments when he felt tempted to start up and put an end to himself and his impending distresses.

He arose as soon as the people of the house were stirring, and forcing himself to swallow a morsel of breakfast, he hastened to the warehouse of Sandford and Co. which was the only hope he had.

When he arrived there it was still early; the doors were only just open, and the man whose business it was to make the fires and sweep the counting-house was in the midst of his task. John Withers sat down, unmindful of the dust and thankful for the respite.

After a while the young men belonging to the concern came dropping in, but they all wore an anxious look and stood whispering in knots in the different rooms, instead of betaking themselves to their business; they seemed like people expecting the next act of a play.

Many other persons, chiefly country spinners and manufacturers like John Withers, had also arrived, till the room in which they were waiting was quite full. They were all too anxious and excited to talk much, but bitter words and curses were heard from time to time, and

each looked upon his neighbour with a gloomy, distrustful eye; there was the sympathy of a common lot amongst them, but then every fresh claimant made the prospect of the dividend less.

At length there was heard a slight movement; hope for a moment arose in those anxious hearts, for Mr. Sandford, the senior partner in the firm, entered the room where they were all waiting.

He was a little, mild, gray-haired man of seventy, with gold spectacles on his nose: he was neatly dressed in black, and looked so frail, and feeble, and careworn, that in spite of their own grievances scarcely one of the men assembled but felt pity for him. He had long since retired from all active participation in the business, and every one knew that he had had no cognizance of the reckless conduct of the partner who had absconded.

He looked round upon them all, and bowed with the old-fashioned ceremony which was natural to him, but he did not seem to know what he did.

There was a moment's silence, and then, after an evident effort, he said,—

"Gentlemen, I came down here this morning to say that in consequence of recent unhappy disclosures, this house is obliged to suspend payment till it can be ascertained what our liabilities really are. You are all aware that I have taken no share in the management of this concern for many years. The disclosures of the last few days have come upon me as unexpected as upon any of you. This concern which was carried on by my father, and where I worked as a boy and as a man, shall not be dishonoured if any effort of mine can prevent it. I believe—I hope there will be property enough to satisfy

you and all the other creditors to the utmost farthing—but you must give us time. There is property—we only ask time to make it available. I thought I had done with the world; God forgive me my easiness and blindness. I wish it had pleased God to take me before this had happened!"

The poor old man had borne up to the end, but when he had finished speaking, he sat down, leaning his head on the desk, and cried like a child.

The hard, disappointed men around him were softened; some of them left the place gloomy and in silence, one or two went up to him and tried to cheer him.

John Withers took his hand, and said, with tears in his eyes,

"This is a sore job, Mr. Sandford, for all of us, and for you as much as any; you are an honest man, we all know that; so keep up your heart, or you will never get

things straight, and all hangs upon you. God bless you, Sir, and good morning."

John Withers went away with his heart much lighter than he had entered. He knew the worst, he knew that he must now strain every nerve to keep himself afloat, and the excitement of danger began to work. He felt no want of courage now; he stood face to face with difficulty, and must conquer or be trampled down by it. All the manliness of his nature was roused, and his spirit rose for the conflict.

CHAPTER V.

STRUGGLES.

It was high 'Change, and the pavement before the steps of the Exchange was black and thronged as an ant-hill with men, all busy and occupied with a weight of care upon their minds, which, if they had been philosophers and stopped to analyse, would have bid fair to drive them mad. As it was, the constant necessity to keep moving prevented them from looking too far, or realising unfortunate contingencies. When men are engaged in battle, their energies

are all too much engrossed in fighting to allow them to think about their danger; and soldiers on a march live the intervals between battle and battle with as much indifference as if they enjoyed a renewable lease of their lives.

Few things befall men, however dreadful in anticipation, that they cannot cope with when they have to stand up face to face before them. Men frequently commit suicide in a frenzy of desperate anticipation; but when they are once engaged in a fair fight with the thing they apprehended, a sense of strength and life is developed to which they are faithful.

John Withers knew perfectly well that his prospects were the most precarious, yet he appeared on 'Change with a composed and almost cheerful countenance. Now that the fears which had scared him had emerged from the Valley of the Shadow of

Death, and stood in wholesome daylight, in hard, defined reality, the indomitable spirit of the man rose within him to struggle with his difficulties to the last gasp.

The stoppage of Sandford and Co. was the first topic of conversation; but, before 'Change dispersed, other rumours, of a more alarming description, arose; banks were mentioned as tottering, and firms were also spoken of as involved which had hitherto stood high. Two large failures were declared, in which, however, John Withers had no immediate concern; but the general aspect of the market was gloomy—very little business was stirring. Men who had been very wild about speculations had now a re-action of prudence. Credit had received a severe shock, which vibrated through the entire commercial chain.

John Withers's immediate anxiety was to

raise money to pay his wages on Saturday night—a trifling sum lodged in the bank formed the only fund immediately available. He had money owing to him, but he had also payments to make; he had bought cotton to a larger amount than was likely to answer, for prices seemed more inclined to recede than to advance. Other difficulties loomed in the back-ground; but these were what more immediately pressed upon him, and must be staved off at once. The whole of that day, John Withers went about from one to another; but money was scarce, no one seemed to have any; Mr. Higginbottom owed him for some goods, and this was his chief hope, for Mr. Higginbottom was shrewd and cautious. He was sitting at his desk in the warehouse when John Withers entered; a half smile passed over his face, and with an air

of false *bonhommie* he shook hands with him.

"Well, Mr. Withers, and how are things with you? are you caught at last? But you want your brass I reckon, and I have none for thee; if thou'lt come again on Thursday, may be I'll be ready for thee."

John Withers felt very blank at this announcement, though it was what he had almost expected; he put a good face on the matter, and only said:

"Well, if you cannot you cannot. Solomon was a wise man and Sampson was a strong one; but they could neither of them pay money when they had none: but I reckon you will be prepared on Thursday."

"Ay, ay, we will see about that. Are you interested in the Joint Stock Glass Company? because I was told as a bit of a secret that their affairs were not looking

well. I wish they may not half of 'em fail."

John Withers had no concern in any speculation unconnected with his own business. Mr. Higginbottom owed him a grudge as well as money. He disliked him for his enlightened ideas in the management of his work-people. He disliked him because he was always carrying out some improvement in his machinery; and though Mr. Higginbottom was much the richer man, yet he always felt that John Withers stood higher in the world's opinion than he did himself. To know that John Withers had received any check or sustained any reverse would have been highly gratifying to him, and he would have helped him to a fall if he could have done so; but hid all this under a mask of rough good fellowship, which, however, hardly disguised the malignity of his heart.

"That chap wants brass," said he to himself, after John Withers had left his place. "We shall see whether his fine philanthropic nonsense will keep him in hard cash."

John Withers stayed over the next day in Manchester, and went to several other parties; some paid him money on account, others put him off with reasons better or worse; but the fact remained the same at the end of them. He returned home that night wearied and anxious; he had not raised enough to pay his workmen, and this was Wednesday. He had not, however, forgotten Marian's commission; he matched the silk, and took it home with him. Aunt Alice had everything bright and comfortable, to make him forget his vexations; but the first glance at his face told her that he was fighting a battle that had only begun. He sat silent and abstracted

the whole evening,—even the newspaper had lost its charms. Aunt Alice knitted in sympathising silence, and Marian, feeling that something was wrong with her father, exerted herself to amuse him in every way she could think of. She sang to him all the old ballads he liked best; she told him all that had happened since he left the day before, which, though not at all amusing in itself, became so by her skill in telling it; for women are singularly gifted with the art of making much out of a little. Sometimes it is a very inconvenient faculty; but under certain circumstances it is both useful and fascinating, and Marian's account of the visits she and her aunt had paid to one of the workman's wives who was ill, made Aunt Alice say:

"Well, Marian, though I was with thee, I would have been puzzled to find as

much to say about it; thou art as good as a book."

John Withers smiled absently; it was out of the power of anything but deliverance to distract his melancholy. He was realizing all the suffering to his men if he were obliged to stop the mill, and he was writhing under the disgrace of not meeting his engagements. He had stern fortitude to endure the worst, and energy to enable him to strain every nerve to avert the impending ruin; but he could not be cheated even into a moment's forgetfulness. He sat all that evening by his fireside, looking his trouble in the face:

"Like some bold seer in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance
With a glassy countenance."

Marian gradually sank into silence; and every now and then Aunt Alice stole a

quiet glance into his face, as he sat gazing into the fire. When it was time to retire to rest, John Withers pushed aside the clustering curls from his daughter's face, and looking on her, said,

"How like thou art to thy mother; she used to be very gentle with me, but she hadna' thy spirit. Instead of sewing at them flowers, thou might help me with my books to-morrow; come to the counting-house, and I will give thee a job."

Marian retired that night with her spirits rather raised than depressed by the thought that difficulties beset her father. There is always to the young an idea of nobleness and adventure, in the prospect of struggling with unknown and untried difficulty. Marian thought, as she fell asleep, how charming it would be to go into the world to work for her living,

and give all she earned to her father and Aunt Alice!

Difficulties, as well as delights, have their romance, but the edge of the ideal in both cases is apt to be turned by the first assault upon realities. Life is an art, and it requires the knowledge acquired by a long apprenticeship to combine into a wise and comely whole, the chaos of apparently fortuitous accidents that make up the complication of real life. The young have energy, and begin the undertaking in hope and strength; but it is by the power of continuance and endurance that the strength and value of each character is proved. Marian built castles in the air about all that she would do for her father, as much as she had done about what she would desire to happen to herself; she had as yet no idea of what work really

was, nor of all the painful drudgery by which alone the most trifling results can be obtained. Happy are they who have the strength to walk on without wearying!

When she awoke the next morning the glow had not faded from her visions. She arose with a feeling of complacency; she was going to be the companion of her father, and to help him.

She accompanied her father after breakfast to his private office, and wrote patiently all the morning to his dictation. They were chiefly statements and summaries of his affairs, which he would not have chosen to come to the knowledge of his clerk.

"Well," said he at last, "thou art a good and industrious lass; it is a pity thou wert not a lad. Now I must be off to Manchester this afternoon on some business, and whilst I am away do thou

copy out this paper, and be careful about the figures, not to make mistakes. It is a summary of where I stand in the world, and what the chances are for and against me. It will take thee till bed-time, but it should be ready against I come back."

Marian had never sat so long at work before, but she felt too proud of her usefulness to think of being fatigued. As soon as her father had departed, she returned to the desk in the office, and did not quit it till her task was completed

a man in difficulties; the price was ruinous, but the money must be had, for his last purchase of cotton in Liverpool was now coming due, and must be provided for. With all his efforts he was still short, and only one hope remained to him of making up the sum required. Furnished with the statement which Marian had copied, he betook himself to his old friend Wilcox.

Mr. Wilcox was a good, kind-hearted man; but though he could be liberal in some things, and give money when it was to be applied to some special object that interested him, still he had a dislike to lend money, which he always called "giving his savings to another man to spend." He looked exceedingly sulky when John Withers unfolded his errand, and felt all the more vexed because he had no intention of refusing. However, when

he had examined the document John Withers had brought, things did not look so bad. Time seemed the principal thing needed to carry him through his difficulties. With a natural pang at paying out so much ready money, he gave him the two hundred pounds immediately needed, and, moreover, promised to lend him five hundred pounds for three months at reasonable interest, and on the security he offered.

Whether John Withers or Samuel Wilcox felt the most annoyance in this transaction is doubtful. John Withers, for the first time in his life, had a weight of debt hung about his neck. He had, moreover, incurred an obligation, and he had a foretaste of the misery it would be to face his creditors without the means of paying them. As to Mr. Wilcox, his sufferings were from the natural and proverbial uncertainty of money lent to a friend;

but he was doing very well, and had made no losses lately: and when the immediate smart of parting with the cash had subsided, he felt a glow of self-complacency at having helped an old friend, that was quite delightful. He had an immense respect for John Withers, and he felt rather flattered at having conferred an obligation upon him.

John Withers returned home with at least a short breathing time before him, and he slept that night for the first time that week.

The next day the men came as usual to receive their wages. John Withers sat with the hardly-acquired money before him, and saw it gradually disappear without knowing how long he would be able to provide for the weekly drain. The celerity with which it melted away in small payments was almost absurd, when contrasted

with the difficulty and anxiety there had been to obtain it.

After they were all paid, he bid them stop, as he had something to say to them. "There is bad news for all of us," he continued; "I have made heavy losses lately, and I don't see my way clear before me till things shape better. I must put you on half-time; it is better than no time at all, and even that is more to keep you all together than for any advantage to me. Meanwhile, if any of you like to look out for another shop, you are free to do so; and if you can better yourselves, why, do it. Now that you will have three days a week to play yourselves in, don't get into bad ways. When I was a workman, I would have been glad of aught that gave me three days a week to work for myself. However, as soon as better times come to me, be sure you shall be

the first to profit by them. Next week you will all come as usual, but leave work at one o'clock.

CHAPTER VI.

The men departed downcast enough, and John Withers was left alone.

For some time he remained plunged in thought; he went round the different rooms of the mill which had been so recently deserted. The afternoon sun shone through the windows, illuminating the innumerable motes of dust that filled the air. The stillness and silence seemed all the more dense as compared with the noisy life which had so recently prevailed.

The machinery, too, had a strange, ghostly look with it, its multitude of

wheels and spindles, arrested in the midst of their busy motion.

John Withers walked amongst them and surveyed each piece of machinery as a father would regard a child stricken with a sickness that might carry it away.

He walked some time in a melancholy abstraction, when his eye was caught by one of the spindles that had got wrong. He stopped to examine it, and it did not seem to require much repair. His tool-box stood in the private office: he fetched it, and set to work on the disjointed spindle; gradually his perplexities were all forgotten. A new improvement suggested itself, and for several hours he was employed in endeavouring to work out the idea that had flashed upon him. As his thoughts rose to the region of science, his mind grew calm.

John Withers was disturbed from his

name was on it had just arr
to see him. He returned
and found Mr. Cunningham
garden with Aunt Alice, an
bees with an interest that ha
the old lady's heart.

"I fear," said he, "you w
ceive me, after twice breakin
ment with you, but I so mu
see more of you, that I woul
false shame confirm my previ
ments."

"You are heartily welco
John Withers. "We are gl
now you are

and if there is any inn in the village where I can sleep, I mean to stay till Monday."

Aunt Alice began to think whether her Sunday's dinner would be good enough; but John Withers with the natural indifference of his sex to household problems, replied, "If you will stop here, sir, we can give you a bed, and we shall be proud of your company."

Mr. Cunningham made no objection, beyond fearing he might inconvenience them; and then settled down, well pleased, into the calm, cheerful, homely life, which had opened to receive him.

He continued to walk in the garden, and to enjoy the exquisite sunny quiet of the place, without any effort at conversation. John Withers was naturally a shy, reserved man, but he felt as if he had known Mr. Cunningham all his life, and that he in some way belonged to the family.

thought and feeling of the
people: endowed originally
genial nature, they are like
climates in which the produ
lands can take root and flou
subject to the idiosyncracie
men shut up in themselves,
broad, friendly surface to
and assimilate naturally wit
genuine and true in the ex
who approach them. These
true priests of humanity. Th
cile contradictions, understan
perceive the good that may
out of evil and bring

the village. I love to see the folks on a Saturday getting their houses in order."

Mr. Cunningham readily acceded to this proposal. As they passed, the women were seen stoning the flags of their cottages or finishing their washing and ironing; the men were some of them working in their gardens, others lying on the grass and resting, but the greater number had set off in bands for a stroll in the country, taking their dogs with them to hunt rats, run races, or fight, as it might happen. The working-classes are great dog-fanciers—bull-dogs, terriers, and others of a curious mongrel breed, are sources of great delight to them.

"Are these all your work-people?"

"Mostly so, sir."

"They look a happy set, and almost realise one's ideal of village life."

"Yes, sir, they are like children, they

never look at trouble till it comes. I wish I could see more forethought in them. They will only get half-wages next week, and I fear very few of them have anything laid by. Then, when distress comes, they make unions against their masters, and treat them as if they were their natural enemies, instead of seeing that their interests must go together if either party are to prosper. I like to see men independent, and with spirit to stand up for themselves, but the working-classes are very short-sighted in the way they take to assert themselves."

"They need educating, as you said the other day," replied Mr. Cunningham, "and education will civilise them; till that is the case no country can be safe, much less truly prosperous, with large masses of its population half-awakened to the sense of their own strength, but ignorant and un-

disciplined, lying at the foundation of society. They are the most numerous as well as the most suffering class of the community. To organise the masses that have been congregated together in manufacturing districts, to civilise them and educate them, is the great work of the present century, and one not to be achieved in a day."

"Well, sir, trade has done great things already, and will do more yet. It has put the means in every man's hands to help himself; no matter what he is born to, he may raise himself to anything. We find each other out to be men like ourselves as soon as we come to have dealings together, whatever countrymen they may be. Our lower orders will get sense in time, when they are more educated; but I don't think setting to work to 'organise them,' as you call it, would do them any good.

An Englishman must see a thing for himself before he will do it."

"You are right there; but it is through the efforts of those who strive to effect *more* than is possible that any progress is made at all. Nothing would be done if only the strictly necessary were aimed at. The inert mass that has to be moved is so enormous, that people endowed with mere common sense and reasonable expectations would never think of attempting the task. It needs those whom the world stigmatises as 'fools,' 'dreamers,' and 'visionaries,' to lead the 'forlorn hope' of attempting to regenerate the world; and when they are beaten back, and see their sublime visions clouding over, and their noble hearts sicken with disappointment, then the men of common sense, practical good men, follow the track of these martyrs, and realise the fruit of their labours.

The world takes a great deal of awakening, and these 'visionaries,' these men of 'extreme opinions,' are all needed; they may seem to achieve nothing, yet it is through them that—

'The world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes, and fears it heeded not.'"

"I like what you say very much, sir," said John Withers, smiling, "and, I am sure, I would be glad to do my utmost to help the poorer classes to education and wisdom of all kinds; but, you see, I am one of the practical men, and I know how rough and difficult is the way of all improvement. Those who have to do the work cannot see the visions. But now, let us go home, the old woman will be waiting for us."

Aunt Alice was waiting for them, and wondering what had kept them so long.

Marian had twice gone to the gate to look for them before they came in sight.

The tea was set out in the garden, under the shade of a large tree, and Aunt Alice had brought out a splendid piece of honeycomb, to reward Mr. Cunningham for his appreciation of her bees; he still further won her favour by being very hungry, and doing justice to her good cheer.

After tea, Mr. Cunningham said, with a smile, to Marian, "Will you think I have taken a great liberty? I have brought some books for you which you ought to read. I asked my sister to send them down from London; and, when you have read them you shall have more; but you must let me select for you at present. By way of beginning, I have brought you two volumes of Sismondi's 'Républiques Italiennes,' and Southey's

'Curse of Kehama.' I dare say you would have liked Lord Byron a great deal better, but you are not going to read him yet; however, if you are a good girl, I will read you 'Sardanapalus' to-night, whilst your aunt is knitting and your father reads his newspaper, and you may do your worsted work."

Marian laughed. "How can you guess so exactly how we are going to employ ourselves; and how am I to thank you enough for being so good as to think of getting books for me?—the very things I most needed, and was least able to obtain."

"Never mind all that, but make haste, and sit down, and recollect I will have no going away to look for needles and scissors."

"There is no fear of that," said Marian.

She was soon seated beside her aunt,

who at first thought it would be scarcely respectful to work whilst a book was being read, but she was soon persuaded to be comfortable. John Withers betook himself to his accustomed corner, where he was soon buried in the pages of his newspaper, and Mr. Cunningham began to read.

Perhaps there is no pleasure greater than that of introducing a young and ardent mind for the first time to the knowledge of the masterpieces of literature. Mr. Cunningham felt this intensely, as he watched the expression of Marian's face during the progress of the drama —her work dropped from her hand, and she sat in a trance of admiration and enjoyment. That evening was as memorable to her as the one when she heard music for the first time.

CHAPTER VII.

SUNDRY MATTERS.

The next morning everyone went to church. It was a plain building, of gray stone, like all the buildings about, and having been erected before the fashion for bringing back all things to the manner and style of Rubric injunctions, the interior was very bald and uninteresting; the pulpit stood with its back to the communion table; the clergyman would as soon have thought of preaching in his shirt sleeves as in his surplice; the pews had not only doors, but the sides were so

high that the congregation were literally kept on the "separate system," and in some of the large square pews, lined with green baize, there were actually a table in the centre and an abundant supply of foot-stools. The windows did not contain a single pane of stained glass, and the summer sun glared through the building in the most dazzling and distressing manner. The organ-loft and singing-gallery stood immediately over the altar; and, from the full complement of singers, it seemed to be a favourite branch of the service. The old clerk, peering through his spectacles, gave out, in a cracked, nasal tone, the first line of the magnificent "Old Hundredth,"—

"All people that on earth do dwell,"

and the full rich chorus of voices that responded to it from the singing-gallery took Mr. Cunningham by surprise. He did not

know that the county was famous for its fine voices and chorus singers. The organ was asthmatic, and the stops creaked as they were drawn out; but the singing was *con amore*, and contrasted with the coldness and insipidity with which the rest of the service was performed. The vicar being from home, the curate preached. He was a young man, with a very pale face, and stiff light hair, standing straight up from his forehead. His sermon was on the miracle of the water turned into wine, at the marriage at Cana, in Galilee; which, no doubt, struck many of his hearers as a very tempting miracle; but, beyond that, the sermon had nothing which, by any possibility, could apply to the heart or experience of any of his hearers. It consisted of allusions to eastern marriages, vague declamations about the ensnaring nature of convivial parties, and wound up with the exhortation to par-

take of the pleasures of the world with moderation; the congregation was then dismissed, to meet the difficulties and temptations of their ensuing week as best they might—not one word to nourish exalted or noble thoughts—not one word of counsel for those who might be struggling with temptations—not a word of comfort for any of the varieties of human sorrow which must have been before him in that congregation.

When they left the church, Mr. Cunningham offered his arm to Marian; as they walked along she said,

"I suppose I am very wicked, but do you know I grudge going to church on a fine Sunday like this—to be shut up in a close church to hear things that seem to have no meaning. I have often gone hoping to hear a sermon that would tell me of something I might do—for I feel as if I

were quite wrong in the way I lead my life, though I cannot explain how; but a vague sense of responsibility weighs upon me, I cannot understand why; and certainly I never hear anything in church to help me. It must be very delightful to live beside some one much wiser than oneself, who would guide us and teach us what we ought to do to be right."

"You are wishing for an impossibility," said Mr. Cunningham. "Each one of us must bear the weight of his own life. No one can cast the responsibility of his own self-government upon another. No human being can tell another in so many compendious phrases how he is to lead his life. To live worthily is no easy matter. The opinions and directions you so much wish for must be distilled by each one for himself from the daily and unremembered actions of his life."

"It has seemed to me, at times," said Marian, "for it is not always I can think of it, that my life is something so mysterious and precious, that nothing I can do seems worthy of filling it up. There is nothing that seems of consequence, whether it be done or not, and I feel as if I were wasting what is infinitely precious, without knowing how to do better. I am like those savages Robertson mentions, who had so much gold that they roofed their houses with it, and made their common utensils of it; yet they were savages who did not know its worth, but gave it willingly for beads and nails. What we receive in exchange for our life is not of much more value."

"This very dissatisfaction—this desire to spend your time adequately, is a good sign for you. It is the effort of your soul to live worthy of itself. All noble spirits are tormented with this remorse for their short-

comings, which inspires them, however, with an heroic parsimony for each instant, and to do with all their might whatever work or duty lies before them with energy. It is not by waiting for some great task that we honour our life; it is by doing the duties that every day and every hour brings forth. This may sound commonplace, but it would throw light on your perplexity if you could live up to it. But tell me what it is that you spend your life in doing?"

"Oh, I work sometimes for myself, sometimes I help Aunt Alice at the mending and making—then I read, and I practise my music—sometimes I draw a little; but I always feel as if I were waiting for something to be set me that was worth doing. I have no one to speak to, which makes me very dull. I went on a visit to an old schoolfellow at Carrisford, near Knutsford, and that was the

very happiest time I ever knew—it was like a new world—everything was so beautiful and stately, it was like living in a novel to be there. That time stands out in my life like a pleasant dream."

"I know all the family," said Mr. Cunningham. "Mr. Arl is a most worthy man. He is connected in business with a cousin of mine in Manchester; and Albert, Mrs. Arl's cousin, is in their office, but he wants industry. Mrs. Arl is a remarkable woman, and worthy of better things. The very style of life you so much admire has been her misfortune. If she had been obliged to earn her own living instead of marrying a rich man, she would have been a happier woman. She has more capability running to waste than any woman I know; but she is another instance of 'the deceitfulness of riches' rendering more precious gifts unfruitful."

"And yet," rejoined Marian, "I felt

as if introduced to a new life whilst I was there: all I have ever dreamed of refined and beautiful I found there. I feel to have had my eyes opened to a new world, and I have endeavoured, as well as I was able, to make all my habits more elegant, and my room, and everything I could act upon more beautiful than they were before I was at Carrisford. I know it is all in a very poor, imperfect way, yet I am glad to have had the instinct awakened; and you cannot imagine the intense gratification there is in having things nice around one, instead of everything wearing a common, bald, every-day look, as they do with Mrs. Wilcox; and, if I feel better for having been to Carrisford, how can Mrs. Arl be the worse for living constantly in contact with all that is refined and beautiful?"

"You are mixing up many questions

together," said Mr. Cunningham. "It does not surprise me in the least that you were sensible to the civilising influence of beautiful objects and tasteful external arrangements; nor even that you were so carried away with them, as displayed at Carrisford, that you did not even perceive the grave faults that lay beneath the surface of that glittering life. You only attracted to yourself that which nourished and developed the ideal life within you. The capital sin of Mrs. Arl's life is that it has no ideal. She lives for herself. Where you saw beauty, she only sees the material expression of wealth and consequence; all that surrounds her, even her own gifts of beauty and genius, are vulgarised by being made entirely subservient to *herself*. She wishes to obtain distinction as a woman of fashion, to be of consequence in the neighbour-

hood—not because she envies the increased duties and higher responsibilities which attend on an elevated social position, but because she desires the vulgar satisfaction of being thought to belong to a sphere of society above that in which she was born. The dream of a milkmaid to marry a lord and to ride in a coach-and-six, is every bit as commendable. No life that has the aggrandisement of *self* for its 'being's end and aim,' can be aught but low and vulgar. Mrs. Arl's life has in it no ideality: neither has it any worth or usefulness. Mrs. Arl's life is *worldly* in grain; and in proportion as she is endowed with noble faculties, and is capable of better things, so does the spectacle of the use she makes of them excite the greater indignation: they are precious things utterly spoiled and run to waste:—

'—— for mid the wreck of Is and Was,
Things incomplete and purposes betray'd
Make sadder transits o'er truth's mystic glass
Than noblest objects utterly decay'd.'"

Marian was silent. There was something almost stern in Mr. Cunningham's manner, and she felt herself rebuked for much folly and vanity; indeed, she took what he had said much more to herself than as applying to Mrs. Arl, for she thought Mr. Cunningham was very severe in his judgment upon her.

"Well, I did not intend to make you so resolutely keep silence; I shall repent of my zeal if it has that effect. Come, tell me how you used to spend your time at Carrisford, and how you came to make that acquaintance?"

Marian smiled, and said, "You have more than half frightened me; I shall think we were all very wicked; and yet

I was never so happy in all my life as in the time I spent there."

Marian was delighted to have an opportunity of talking of her friends. She soon recovered her spirits, and chattered away to Mr. Cunningham's great amusement. She certainly, as she imagined, carefully hid the secret of her love for Albert in the depths of her heart; but, as it may be fancied, did not leave exactly unrevealed the secret spring of her great happiness at Carrisford.

They had by this time reached home, and Marian had a number of small domestic matters to attend to before dinner. She and Aunt Alice went in, and left John Withers and Mr. Cunningham to stroll in the garden until they were summoned.

It is curious how we are impelled to speak openly and truly to some people

whom, perhaps, we have only known for a short time. There are some who have the gift of penetrating like daylight into our inmost thoughts. The amount of confidence we place in any one is just in proportion to their influence over us; we feel by instinct that they will understand what perplexes us, and give us the counsel we need. We always love those who possess the clue to our labyrinth. It is in a lesser degree similar to the comfort we find in religion, where we have no need to assert ourselves or to explain ourselves. We repose in the consciousness that we, with all our sins, with all our weakness, are seen just as we really are.

When the world misjudges us, or when we are perplexed by the inconsistencies of our own deceitful hearts, it is comfort unspeakable to feel that we are in the

light of our great Father's eye, that we are in His hands, and that we shall be judged by Him, and not by any poor, circumscribed mortal like ourselves.

Marian and Aunt Alice went to church again in the afternoon, but Mr. Cunningham and John Withers remained at home deep in conversation; that conversation had a great influence on the future career of John Withers, as will be shown.

The next day Mr. Cunningham took his departure, after inspecting the mills, and being introduced to all John Withers's improvements and patented machinery.

Marian was sorry to lose him, but he talked of coming again shortly, and promised Marian to send her some more books in the meantime.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mrs. Thomas Arl had not fed on the mountain tops of vanity for nothing. Whilst she was at Mortlock Park, she made acquaintance with a fashionable beauty, the Honourable Mrs. St. George. She was a creole, and had been an heiress in her own right. She was a spoiled petted creature, and chose to take a great fancy to Mrs. Arl, who amused her, and she accepted with eagerness an invitation to come and stay at Carrisford.

Mrs. Arl resolved to take this occasion to celebrate her initiation into high society

by giving a very grand entertainment indeed. She determined that it should be a ball, but as balls are common things, hers was to be preceded by the performance of the opera which had been so long in preparation, and which she had begun to despair of ever seeing come to pass. An entire opera was of course out of the question,—this was only to be a selection of scenes from Don Giovanni.

She calculated that Albert would certainly be returned by the twelfth of October, and she issued her invitations accordingly.

Mr. Arl did not at all like the prospect of such social outbreaks and inroads on his manners and habits, and he made some attempts to divert her purpose by pretending that Albert would be detained, and have to proceed, it might be, to Constantinople and Smyrna, and advised her

to summon her guests for that day next year.

But Mrs. Arl was far too strong-minded to be turned aside by any ordinary amount of opposition, and between the cajoleries of Mrs. St. George and the persistence of Mrs. Arl, Mr. Arl was fain to give his adherence, and even to take an interest in the plan.

It was the first attempt at private theatricals in the neighbourhood.

Some of the old-fashioned Tory families declared that it was a scandalous innovation on English decorum, and called Mrs. Arl a giddy, flighty young woman, who wished to introduce the laxity of continental manners into the hearths and homes of England. Foreigners were not in those days so commonly seen in England as they are now, and the sallow-complexioned, moustached Italians, and light-haired,

ruddy-visaged Germans, who were frequent guests at Carrisford, and who all smoked, and sang, and danced, and amused themselves with great appearance of enjoyment, had struck all the old reputable resident families with grave disapprobation. It was this difference in their manners and tastes that, more than anything else, had contributed to keep up a distance between the Arls and their neighbours. This opera, however, although a greater innovation even than ordinary, had been countenanced by high authority. Lady Mortlock had declared that it would be charming, and promised to fill her house for the occasion.

Mr. Glynton contributed his mite by inviting down sundry dowager men of fashion, whose names suggested traditions of good society and days of dissolute glory long since departed. He wished the party to go off well, and like an Ahasuerus the

second, he wished to produce his fair *fiancée*, not only in all her freshness and beauty, but also in the odour of good society, that they might not think he had been reduced to a *mésalliance*.

The library was selected for the opera, the raised dais affording a capital stage, and there was a good-sized apartment behind it, which, would answer admirably for a green-room.

Mrs. Arl and Hilda were sitting at the writing-table, pen in hand, writing notes and making out lists of things to be bought and things to be done, immersed in all the preparatory business incident to giving a large party, when Mrs. St. George entered the room; she was wrapped up in a priceless cashmere shawl and a charming garden bonnet, perched with a most bewitching air upon her head. She was, as we have said, a creole, and had all the traditional gracefulness of her race.

She entered with the air of a spoiled child,—her dark, crystalline eyes sparkled with eagerness.

"Oh, my dearest Mrs. Arl, I have thought of the most charming plan in the world; but how hot it is! I am half-dead with coming across the garden from the conservatory!"

She threw both bonnet and shawl on the floor, and flung herself into a corner of the sofa with the prettiest half-petulant air of fatigue imaginable. A splendid brooch had become entangled in a scarf that was round her throat; too impatient to remove it, she tore it away.

"You extravagant child!" cried Mrs. Arl, "to wear that lovely Chantilly veil for a handkerchief! See how you have torn it with that heavy brooch!"

"Bah! it is not a veil at all, it is only a little scarf; that brooch is too heavy

for anything, it is always tearing something. Hilda, you shall have it; it may come in for your *trousseau*."

"But it is far too beautiful to be given away, or for me to take," remonstrated Hilda.

"Nonsense, don't make difficulties, they put me out of breath. They are only Indian pebbles; they look pretty enough, but the brooch is too heavy, so it is no generosity. Give me that pretty carved ivory pin, which is just what I want."

Hilda and Mrs. Arl both knew too well the reckless lavishness of the beautiful creole to waste any more words; but they both resolved to be in future doubly on their guard against admiring or observing anything she possessed.

Extravagant in her expenditure, she would buy up a milliner's stock, or half empty a curiosity shop of baubles that

took her fancy at the moment; she was equally profuse in parting with anything she possessed if some one she liked expressed a passing admiration of it. Her first great pleasure in life was to make purchases; her next was to give them away.

"And now, dear Mrs. Arl, let me tell you my plan. Do not you think it would be charming to make your ball a *bal costumé?*—all the actors will be in fancy costume to begin with. This house seems made for a *fête,* and I have just been reading such a description in a French novel, that it has made me wild to get one up. There is plenty of time for you to announce the fact, and everybody will like it."

"Mr. Arl would never listen to such a proposal," said Mrs. Arl shaking her head; "I have had difficulty enough as it is to

persuade him to give a natural ball; he does not like parties, and I want to keep him in a good-humour if I can. Besides, if even I could succeed in persuading Arl, there is Mr. Glynton, who is barbarous in his notions of decorum."

"Ah, yes!" interjected Hilda, "he would never forgive me a fancy dress; it would remind him of I know not what bygone impropriety of his youth."

"Well, my dear, you ought to have taken a man who was not such an adept in the mystery of iniquity, and who would not have discerned a wicked hieroglyphic in every little unconsidered trifling act. You will have a weary time before you can persuade him that you drink your tea without a stratagem."

"You see," said Mrs. Arl deprecatingly, "it would be a pity for Hilda to vex Mr. Glynton just now."

Mrs. St. George pouted. "I had invented such a beautiful costume for us all three. How very tiresome men can be when they choose. Do you think Arl would consent if I were to coax him?"

"Not to a fancy ball I am sure; but if you were to say a few civil things to him, it might perhaps make him more disposed to let us have our own way about the arrangements for the twelfth, and there are many points I have set my heart upon, and I foresee great difficulties."

"What sort of difficulties?" asked Mrs. St. George.

"I should like to have a new chandelier for the drawing-room, and he has refused to have it."

"Bah, I will soon persuade him to that, and I shall feel a mischievous pleasure in enticing him into extravagance," said Mrs. St. George, gaily; and the idea of this

small intrigue quite consoled her for the loss of the fancy ball.

Mr. Arl was in his heart very fond of his wife, and proud of having her admired; he did not stand any long siege, but soon yielded to the representations made to him, and allowed himself to be what he could not help considering, very extravagant.

Mrs. Arl superintended the decorations of the house, which was much more indebted to her genius than to the professional ideas of the upholsterers. She had so much fine taste and artistic skill that it was a great pity to see them running to waste. But a woman's vanity must be slaked of some strong emotion before she can care for something better than admiration. When she loves, she cares for another, but then that is often an egotism *à deux*. When she becomes a

mother she can cease to think of herself, and that will regenerate her character, if any thing can; but Mrs. Arl had never experienced either of those conditions, and all her rich capabilities were lying dried and hardened, under the drouth of untempered vanity.

She was just now perhaps as happy as any woman in the world. She was going to give a splendid party. All the people she most desired to have had promised to come, and Arl had just presented her with a most superb lace dress. She was in full beauty, not a spot marred the transparency of her rich complexion, and she knew that not a woman amongst all whom she expected could be compared to her in point of looks—what could she desire more?

Mr. Arl only made one stipulation in the midst of this free flowing tide of

universal acquiescence, which was that Marian should be invited. He wished for some one in the midst of all the fine people, who would take some interest in talking to him, and not leave him to be quite alone in the midst of all the gaiety.

At first Mrs. Arl made objections. "Marian would be out of her element, she had not been accustomed to society, people would wonder where she came from;" and many other reasons of the same kind; but Hilda warmly seconded the proposal which she had once before made unsuccessfully, and Albert (who had returned, looking handsomer than ever) joined his voice to beg she might be invited: he wished to have some one to fall back upon in case Lady Wollaston should treat him coolly, and Marian was quite pretty enough to flatter a man's vanity. Finally, Mrs. Arl wished to keep her husband in a good

temper and she reflected, that among so many Marian would never be remarked.

The most apparently simple occurrences often require as many ingredients for their completion as a witch's cauldron.

Mrs. Arl sat down to her desk immediately, and wrote a cordial, energetic invitation that would brook no refusal.

Marian might have been the one beloved guest upon whose coming all her own share of pleasure depended.

The letter was written on highly enamelled, delicately perfumed paper, and sealed with "a cupid riding upon an ass." Who could have thought so many motives had gone to produce it!

A poor chemist who went insane with too much study, believed that the devil was a form of carbonic acid gas, and that it would be quite possible to resolve him back into his original element, and to keep

him thus decomposed for seven years. If all our actions could be as easily resolved back into their original motives, what a wonderful chaos the world would see!

CHAPTER IX.

THE SECOND VISIT TO CARRISFORD.

Mrs. Arl's letter arrived the morning after Mr. Cunningham's departure.

Marian's newly-formed resolutions of industry and usefulness were not proof against an intense desire to accept the invitation, and to be once more at Carrisford.

She fancied that Mrs. Arl would be displeased and disappointed if she were to refuse. It is wonderful the aspect of moral obligation things sometimes assume when we wish to do them.

She dreaded to ask her father for money

just now, and yet how could she give up the visit? In this dilemma she went to Aunt Alice, who read the letter all through, and then shook her head. "I do not like this fine place for thee at all; I wish thou couldst be persuaded to stay at home."

"I must go, aunt!" said Marian impetuously.

"Well, well," replied the old lady, gently, "I shall not hinder thee, but thou wilt sup sorrow for it. We must not plague thy father for money; he can ill afford to spare any."

"I have some left of what he gave me before."

"Well, I must make it up for thee. I did intend to have bought thee a velvet mantle, but if thou likest the money better thou shalt have it."

Aunt Alice went to a filagree box which no one ever touched but herself,

and taking out an old red morocco case, black from age, with tarnished silver clasps, she took from it some money which she gave Marian, saying at the same time,—

"There, lass, take it; thou art welcome to it, but dunna blame me if the spending it brings thee ill. Young folks will be young folks, and they must buy their own wisdom. I know why thou wants to go as well as if thou told me; that young chap runs in thy head still."

Aunt Alice did more than this; she took upon herself the task of soliciting permission from John Withers for Marian to go to Carrisford, which she did very zealously, and without allowing her own disapproval to appear.

John Withers sighed as he said,—

"She is sadly fond of pleasure. I thought to have had the comfort of her

company now that I am so down; but at her age it is natural she should be bent on enjoying herself."

He sighed, and looked so melancholy that Aunt Alice more than half repented she had interfered in the matter, and she thought, "How can she leave him to go after such giddy vanities?"

"What shall I tell her?" said Aunt Alice, after a pause; "she is a good lass, and would stay at home directly if you said the word. It is to be a very grand affair seemingly, and they are so set upon having her that she is hardly to be blamed for wishing to go."

"Well, then, let her go," said John Withers; "maybe it will not be long she will have the chance of enjoying herself. I'd be sorry to stand in her way."

So Aunt Alice brought Marian the permission, and did not tell her what

her father had said: nor did she say anything about herself. She had felt very unwell for some days, but did not wish Marian to suffer useless self-reproach as she saw she was determined to go.

Marian made her preparations with feverish haste. Her conscience would not let her feel at ease, but she refused to listen.

She kissed Aunt Alice when she departed with a burst of remorseful affection, and begged her to keep up her father's spirits. She promised to write every day she was absent, and to come home without fail on the day appointed.

When she reached Manchester she had nearly relented, and felt tempted to return home with her father, but whilst she was hesitating her father said,—

"Come, lass, we must make haste, for the coach will be starting. You will write and say how you get there."

He spoke cheerfully, and seemed to take it as a matter of course. There was no more time to lose—he lifted her into the coach—the coachman mounted his box—the guard blew his horn—and she was whirled off, straining her eyes to catch the last look of her father.

When the stage-coach reached Knutsford, Mrs. Arl's carriage was waiting, but there was no one in it. Marian felt a blank disappointment.

During the ride to Carrisford she had full leisure to listen to her conscience, which sadly impeached the validity of the excuses, that "her presence was really wanted;" "that it would have been the height of unkindness to stay away from dear Hilda;" with which she had almost succeeded in persuading herself that going to Carrisford was a matter of obligation.

When she arrived at Carrisford, she

was told that the ladies were out riding, having gone to make some calls in the neighbourhood, but had left a message for her with the lady's maid.

The "message" was a little note scrawled in pencil by Hilda, declaring how annoyed she was to be dragged off to make calls when she would so much sooner have stayed at home to meet her dear Marian; but urging her to rest, and take care of herself till their return, which would be to dinner.

This was a sad damper to all Marian's anticipations of a joyful welcome, not from Hilda alone but from some one else also. Why *do* mortals persist in forming brilliant expectations from any schemes of pleasure, when the very fact of overloading them with hopes secures their downfall, like a castle of cards carried just one story too high?

Mrs. Arl's maid, a middle-aged and very superfine lady, whom Mrs. Arl had set up on the strength of her visit to Mortlock Park, received Marian with a certain disdainful civility. She wondered that she should have received so many charges about a little girl, who evidently did not belong to such society as *she* was accustomed to see.

Mrs. Ryance, which was the august lady's name, conducted Marian to Hilda's room, and replied with the coldest and most repellant dignity to all Marian's inquiries after the family.

Marian felt very uncomfortable in her presence, and more sensible of the demerits of her travelling bonnet than she had ever been before; the look of Mrs. Ryance, as she took it from her hands, was equivalent to a bull of excommunication.

"Mrs. Arl has not decided yet, ma'am,

what room you are to have, in regard as many of the gentlefolks will stay all night after the ball; but if you like to dress before the family come home, Mrs. Arl begged me to assist you, and to dress your hair."

Marian felt excessively annoyed at her tone and manner, and was on the point of declining her services; but as the dressing had to be done she thought better of it, and giving her keys to Mrs. Ryance, she comforted herself with thinking that at least there would be no mistakes in her toilet.

They had scarcely concluded this business when the riding party returned. Hilda rushed into the room, and covered her with kisses.

"Oh, you dear good child! how glad I am you are come! I shall stand some chance of enjoying the party now."

Mrs. Arl followed her, saying,—

"I fear, my dear Miss Withers, you must have thought us all very rude, but there is a family who are coming to the ball, and I was obliged to call upon them first, as they are people of some importance. Mr. Glynton wished Hilda to call also. I am very glad to see you; and how is your father and dear good old Aunt Alice?"

Mrs. Arl had grown considerably more of the fine lady than when Marian had last seen her. There was a slight affectation in her manner, and all her words seemed spoken from the lips.

"I am very sorry you have taken the trouble to dress for dinner," continued she, surveying the somewhat elaborate toilet which had resulted from the labours of Mrs. Ryance. "We are very late, and must sit down as we are; the dinner was

going in as we came up-stairs, and Arl will wait for no one. So come along; ah! there is the bell."

Marian was presented to Mrs. St. George, whose opinion of her coincided with that of Mrs. Ryance, and she wondered how she had come to hear so much about her.

Mr. Arl received Marian with the greatest kindness; he was really glad to see her, and Marian felt more comfortable than she had done since leaving home. Albert was not there; nothing was said about him, and Marian did not dare to inquire. It only needed this to dispel the last of her anticipations of the happiness she expected to find at Carrisford.

At dinner, Mr. Arl said,—

"My dear, what will you give me for inviting you a visitor to-morrow?"

"Who is it?" said Mrs. Arl; "not

one of your horrid business people, I hope. Really, Mr. Arl, you have no notion of times and seasons; you might have chosen another opportunity, I think, to show civility to such people."

Mr. Arl made a comical face at Marian, and seemed highly amused at his lady's apprehensiveness.

"You will see, he is not an officer, nor a county person like those you talk about, and he does not dance; but he is a man after my own heart."

"Well, who and what is he?" said Mrs. Arl, impatiently; "I confess I have not much faith in your nice people. If any one will talk foreign politics to you, it is quite enough."

"But you will be very glad to see this one," continued Mr. Arl; "he is rich, he is good-looking, and he is not in trade at all."

"Do tell us who it is," said Hilda, coaxingly, "is he a foreigner? you say he does not belong to the county."

"No he is English, and Marian will like him I know, because she has judgment."

"Well," said Marian, "do tell us who it is,—I feel quite curious to know."

"His name is Cunningham, his father was my oldest friend. He made a great fortune in the Levant trade, and this son was educated in Germany and has travelled a great deal. He did not take to his father's business, which was a pity: it was a fine connection, but he has a large fortune and has settled in London."

"I think it must be our Mr. Cunningham," said Marian, "from your account of him; he came to see the mills in our neighbourhood,—my father thinks a great deal of him."

Mr. Arl seemed pleased, and continued

his commendations with a zeal somewhat unusual to him.

Mrs. Arl had been making some memorandums, and conversing with Hilda and Mrs. St. George, quite undisturbed by what her husband was saying. She now rose from table, and said,—

"Come Miss Withers, I must go and see what plants the gardener has sent in, and settle where they are to be placed. There are still a thousand things to be done, and I want you two young ladies to make me some pretty light baskets for the supper-table,—some to hold fruit, and some to hold flowers. You will find everything needed in the little west closet, where no one will come to disturb you. Whilst we were out this morning the gardener cut a hamper-full of flowers, which have all to be arranged, so you need not ask for work; now

off with you, for I have no time to stand talking."

"Have you put my smoking-room out of window?" asked Mr. Arl, with a look of comical discomfort.

"Oh no; I thought some of the men might be glad to go away to smoke a cigar, so I have left that room just as it was."

"My lady is very kind to me,—you see she considers me before all the world!" said Mr. Arl, with a mock bow to them as they left the dining-room.

CHAPTER X.

THE setting sun was streaming through the ivy and creeping shrubs which clustered thickly round. A table covered with every variety of vases, glasses, china jars, and baskets, stood below the window; and a hamper-full of choice flowers stood beside it. The two girls, as fresh and as pretty as the flowers themselves, were soon occupied in the task of arranging them.

"How charming," cried Hilda, "to be here out of the way of all the bustle that is going on! I have a world of things to

tell you. Nancy never gave such a grand entertainment before, and the house has been turned upside down in making preparations. I think there is something quite vulgar in having all one's domestic routine so disturbed because there is going to be a party. I have been quite amused to see the grand cook, who has come from London to superintend the preparations,—he is as full of his own dignity as if he were a field-marshal; and he has brought a staff of subalterns with him,—it is quite edifying to see their discipline. I asked the *chef* what had induced a man of his talent to embrace that profession. He replied, gravely, — 'Mademoiselle, from my tenderest years I was penetrated with a sense of what, under proper direction, the art of cookery might become, as the means of enlightening the world; and I have devoted my life to developing the capabilities of its moral

influence.' Only fancy a cook setting up to develope a theory!"

"Ah," said Marian, "Mr. Cunningham says that every man ought to have a veneration for the work he engages in, and that it is the IDEA a man works from which makes the difference between genius and common-place inefficiency."

"I want to hear about that Mr. Cunningham; who is he? and how long have you known him?"

"He is a very clever man who came down to see the neighbourhood; he is interested in manufactures, and he spent two days with us."

"Is he handsome? How old is he?"

"His face is handsome, certainly," said Marian, "and he looks about thirty-five. He is very gentlemanlike, but not fashionable like your cousin. He is very grave and composed, but not cross at all; he

seems so wise that one is inclined to tell him all that is in one's heart! I talked to him as I never talked to any one before. It would be difficult to keep anything concealed from him, or to tell him an untruth."

"How odd!" said Hilda; "then you did not fall in love with him at all?"

"Oh dear no!" replied Marian, with some indignation; "no one would ever think of such a thing—it would not be treating him with respect."

"Does he dance?" pursued Hilda? "Has he a distinguished-looking figure?"

"He did not give me the idea of a man of that sort at all. He is not tall, his figure is rather heavy, but one only thinks of his face, which is very beautiful."

"I can make out nothing from your description," said Hilda; "of what colour are his eyes?"

"Very dark blue, and very large and beautifully shaped."

"And his hair?"

"Black and wavy; he looks as if he had lived abroad a great deal—you would scarcely take him for an Englishman."

"Well, what is he?—would he be a good match for you?"

"I really do not know what he is," said Marian, on whom this conversation jarred extremely; "he struck me as a person of some importance; there was no assumption in his manners, but he seemed accustomed to be treated with great respect."

"I declare you seem afraid to speak of him, and yet if the truth were known, I dare say it was you he came to see."

"Oh dear no," said Marian earnestly; "he came to see my father's mill, but we met him in the first instance when we went to dine with Mr. Wilcox."

"I cannot imagine either Mr. or Mrs. Wilcox to be much in his way. I should think he must be very eccentric by Arl's thinking so highly of him. However we shall see him to-morrow, and I shall soon find out if he cares for you. I am very clever at understanding people's looks."

"All this while you have never told me one word about Mr. Glynton. How are you going on with him?"

"Oh much as usual," replied Hilda, with an impatient look of disgust. "He has been in London for the last week, but I received a letter from him this morning to say that he would be home for the ball to-morrow, and I wish he would have stopped away, I should then have had some chance of enjoying myself; but that is all over now, I shall not dare either to look or to speak in comfort. To be sure he is bringing down some very grand people,—

old broken-down *roués* like himself, but very distinguished and fashionable, and Nancy is very glad to have them at her ball. There will be Lord Coverdale, and the Marquis of Headly, and Captain Beacham, and Sir Cornelius Fitz-Matching, and two or three others. I know that jealous as he is, he is wild for them to admire me, and to envy him, and he is very anxious that everything should go off in the best style, that his friends may think he is marrying into a family of good standing. He has been running about in London like a little dog, executing commissions for Nancy. He chose the grand new chandelier which is to hang in the ball-room, and he has sent such minute directions about decorating the rooms and laying the tables, that I should have thought it quite insulting. He used to be a great deal at Carlton House, and in very high society, so he

knows how everything should be done; still he is such a dreadful bore with it all. He is worse than ever! and so rheumatic that it is quite distressing."

"What will you do when you are married?" said Marian.

"I cannot be worse off than I am now; and then, at least, I shall be sure of the house and the park and the position in the world, so I shall not need to strain so much to be in my good behaviour.

"I never told you how intimate we are become with Lady Wollaston. I don't much like her myself, I think her very cold and proud; but Albert is inclined to admire her. He praises her up to the skies,—not that I think he really admires her so much as because he thinks there would be some *éclat* in being distinguished by the notice of a stylish married woman; for of late he has professed to care for none but married

women, and speaks with contempt of all young girls, as if they were of no account in creation. The more I see of men the more I am disgusted at them; they are all made up of selfishness and vanity."

"My dear Hilda, you are quite a misanthrope, and speak as if you had all the experience of King Solomon to go upon."

"Well, but it *is* as I say. Men think of nothing but themselves: they look upon us women as so much property, to be laid out as it pleases them to have us, not as it is good for us, to be. Some of our qualities are to be cultivated, some to lie fallow; sometimes they choose that we shall be good housewives; at others, we are to be brilliantly accomplished. There is Glynton, for instance, who has run through a course of dissipation which has ruined his constitution and left him a trembling valetudinarian at fifty,—he has

a fancy for little innocent shepherdess-sort of girls, in white muslin; and the white muslin you must understand is an essential part of the innocence. He has taken it into his head that I am a model of all that sort of thing, and I am preferred accordingly. He expects me to look up to him and reverence him as if he were the noblest hero in the world, and if he in the least suspected that I had ever entertained the least liking for another, good-bye to my chance of being Mrs. Glynton! My ideas of perfection are all to centre in him!—and he watches me as jealously as an old cat, for fear I should ever cast a look elsewhere. Yet with all his suspiciousness he is a fool, and I can make him believe any thing I choose, if I only pretend to be as innocent as white muslin can make me. He is vain to insanity, and I am wearied and disgusted at

flattering such an ostrich-like faculty of digestion. When I am once fairly married, I shall starve him for a while. He will have no more compliments from me, I can tell him."

"I am very glad I am not going to be married," said Marian, pensively; "but do not you think it will be very wrong in Lady Wollaston, if she encourages your cousin and tries to make him in love with her?"

"Oh! Albert can take care of himself, never fear, and there will be nothing really wrong if they do not carry it too far,—which of course they will not think of doing, for Lady Wollaston seems a very proper sort of woman."

They continued their employment for a little while, in silence.

"By the way, what dress shall you wear to-morrow?" said Hilda, as she held

up the basket of flowers she was adorning to the light. "I am to have a white moire silk, with the inevitable moss-rose of course. I am so tired of wearing nothing but flowers, it would be quite a relief to my feelings if I might have a brooch."

Marian had, as we have seen, abstained from asking her father for money, and she had determined not to think of a new dress for six months to come, to excuse the extravagance of this journey to her own conscience; but now, on the spot, amongst such fine people and fine things, an adequate dress seemed indispensable.

Women have such an acute perception of times and places, that they often seem to lack stability of purpose, because what seemed appropriate and right in one company and to one set of events,

looks ill-suited in another; they lack the faculty of generalising, they cannot keep hold of a principle through the variations of times and seasons,—and thus seem to fail in moral courage, when, in reality, they are only bewildered by a difference of meridian.

"I will show you what I have," replied Marian; "and I thought you would tell me which dress would be the most suitable."

"Well, let us go and decide upon it at once. It is quite too dark to do any more at these flowers."

They proceeded to Hilda's room, and Marian's wardrobe was displayed.

"Are these all the dresses you have brought?" said Hilda. "I do not mean as to number; there are more than enough. But have you no regular ball dress?"

Marian blushed deeply as she replied, "I have none but these. I thought of wearing this muslin, which I bought because I thought it like a dress of yours, and Aunt Alice gave me some of her old lace to trim it."

"Well, perhaps it will do; but it is not precisely an evening dress."

At this moment Mrs. Arl entered, singing a snatch of a French song.

"Oh! you are here," she exclaimed; "I have been looking for you everywhere. I want your advice about the best height for the new chandelier. You will scarcely recognise the drawing-room; it looks quite beautiful now that the green-house plants are arranged, and the mirrors put up. I had everything to arrange myself, the men were so stupid. But, what are you doing here?"

"We were settling Marian's dress for

to-morrow night, and I was just wishing for you."

Mrs. Arl's notions of the importance of dress had become much developed since her visit to Mortlock Park.

"We had better consult Mrs. St. George; she has such exquisite taste."

Marian would have negatived this proposal had she dared; but Mrs. St. George came, and entered with great zeal into the subject. The duties of the toilet were the only duties Mrs. St. George recognised,—and, to do her justice, these she had never neglected. She looked at the dresses submitted to her with sentiments of dismay and pity.

"None of these will do," said she, shaking her head; "they are all wrong both in principle and execution; but come into my room, and we will see what

Coralie says to this white muslin: the lace upon it is exquisite."

No woman can stand by with composure where her best dresses are slighted. Marian coloured painfully, but did not dare to offer a word in their behalf, and meekly followed the others to the dressing-room of Mrs. St. George.

A graceful, pretty young creature, who had been working there, rose at their entrance.

"Coralie!" cried Mrs. St. George, "come here and tell us if you can do anything with this dress."

Coralie advanced smiling, and looked at the dress much more respectfully than Mrs. St. George had done.

"Ah, yes," said she, in her broken English; "Mademoiselle is so pretty, so gentille, that it will be easy to make the dress well."

Mrs. St. George was delighted to have any one to dress when there was no chance of rivalry in the case. She turned Marian round as though she had been a doll; conversing with Coralie on the shape and fashion into which it was to be remodelled,—as it was fortunately of white muslin there was no difficulty in matching the material.

Mrs. St. George was rather pleased to find Marian so ignorant of the details of dress. She was pleased, too, with her naïve admiration of the elegant details upon the dressing-table.

"I have given a great deal of trouble," said Marian.

"I am charmed to have had the opportunity of doing you justice," said Mrs. St. George; "and Coralie is a true artiste. Nothing pleases her so much as to be allowed to try her skill upon those who will be guided by her taste. I shall have

made her happy for a month by placing you in her hands. As you go more into society, my dear Miss Withers, you will find that nothing renders you more liable to misinterpretation than a mistake in dress. There ought to be a virginal simplicity in the dress of young girls; no ornaments nor pretentiousness of any kind. A woman ought to dress from a perception of beauty, and not from a love of fine clothes. It is only vulgar people who associate the idea of dress with finery. You will have the comfort of looking charming to-morrow night, but you could have had no pleasure had you persisted in wearing that dress as it stood—it would have been worse than a bad conscience!"

"You really have a genius for dressing well," said Mrs. Arl; "and now this important matter is settled, will you all come down to the drawing-room and give

me your opinion upon the result of my labours?"

The remainder of the evening was consumed in the thousand-and-one things that are incidental to all preparations for a general ball. Poor Mr. Arl was driven to take refuge in his smoking-room, the only corner of the house that remained free from invasion; and there he fell asleep in peace over his newspaper.

Marian's heart listened anxiously for some indication that Albert was expected, but listened in vain. It was only when they were on the point of retiring for the night that she heard incidentally that there was a dress rehearsal at the Vivians', and that he would sleep there.

Poor Marian went to bed in a more depressed and dissatisfied frame of mind than she could have believed to be possible at Carrisford.

CHAPTER XI.

Mrs. Arl's party was freighted with many hopes, and fears, and vanities beside her own. Albert arrived early to dress; he met Marian with a politeness that nearly broke her heart. She had expected that they would renew their acquaintance exactly at the promising point where it had been broken off. She herself was unconscious how much her own feelings had acquired of definiteness and consistency during the period of their separation. Besides, it never happens that people meet after an absence exactly as they parted. Marian was not aware of

this; but no amount of experience can make a painful fact agreeable, it can only take away its power to surprise us. She was standing alone in what was to be the green-room, when Albert passed through with his brief greeting. She felt as if the whole world had suddenly broken down beneath her; there was a spasm at her heart of real physical pain, which it seemed impossible to endure; but Hilda came in, and the instinct not to betray herself gave her the strength to be calm; she looked at herself in the mirror to see if she bore any trace of the fiery scathe that had passed through her, but she only saw her own young face, to which the colour had now returned with a somewhat deeper hue than usual.

"Oh, Marian!" cried Hilda, "Nancy says we must dress directly, for that Ryance will be wanted to help Miss Vivian who will come to dress here for *Zerlina*. What are

you doing here all by yourself? Albert is come, but with a dreadful headach, and tired to death, poor fellow! They kept him at that rehearsal till three o'clock this morning, and he has been running about the streets of Manchester all day after his costume, and he has been disappointed of some important items; he is quite put out of his way; I am really sorry to see him so worried—I do not know how he will get through the evening."

Here was comfort for Marian! What had struck her as coldness and indifference was, after all, but the preoccupation of fatigue and annoyance! If she had been told some of the best news in the world, it could not have rejoiced her more; but she replied, in a sympathising tone,—

"I am very sorry he has been vexed; I thought he looked worried when he passed through this room."

"Coralie has finished your dress;—have you seen it yet?"

Marian's interest in her own appearance was now quite revived, and she went upstairs prepared to dress for the ball with all the natural vivacity which a young girl ought to feel. She found the dress laid out upon the bed, looking quite beautiful, and beside it a superb white wreath, a present from Mrs. Arl. Marian possessed no ornaments, but they were not needed. Hilda wore none, but they each had a bouquet of very beautiful flowers made up alike.

Marian looked exceedingly pretty—she saw that she did, and her spirits rose rather above their usual level. Coralie, pleased with the success of her own labours, was profuse in her compliments, and even the grim Mrs. Ryance condescended to approve. Albert, who had been renovating himself with a cigar and a cup of coffee in the

smoking-room, met the girls on their way to show themselves to Mrs. Arl, and stopped to express his approbation of their appearance. He turned Hilda round to look at her, and said, "My dear cousin, I wish you had a prospect of charming somebody better than Glynton; it is quite a pity to see you dressed for such a sacrifice." Then turning to Marian, he said, in a softer voice, and with one of the old looks she so well remembered,—

"How very beautiful you look! Your taste is as exquisite as yourself! Will you give me the first waltz?" If Marian had needed anything to restore her to entire happiness, here it was! and it mattered not that Albert, instead of lingering near her, continued his course, singing one of the airs out of his part.

Mrs. Arl was under the hands of Mrs. Ryance, and too much engaged with her

own affairs to have time to spare for anything beyond general approval. "You look very nice, both of you; but, Hilda, there is too much red in that bouquet. Miss Withers you could not be better.—I shall never be dressed!—I have been hindered and worried down-stairs by people coming to me at the last moment for orders; the men have not finished lighting up the hall! I know people will be coming before everything is ready, and Arl has been so tiresome; he insisted upon altering all the arrangements in the coffee-room, and of course has spoiled all I had done. I would not have minded that so much if he would only have interfered sooner; but just at the last to go and upset all one's arrangements is too bad! I declare I am ready to cry. Do make haste, Ryance! never mind how I look, so that I am dressed. I am sure that is a carriage. There is no pleasure

in giving a ball. I have had nothing but fatigue and vexation about this; and here is a note come to say that the Allinghams will not be here, on account of the death of a relation. Do, Hilda, go down and see how they are getting on." Hilda complied with her sister's request, and Marian went with her. The footmen were struggling into their dress-coats; others were running about in great haste lighting the lamps in the hall, which was already a blaze of light, and beautifully decorated. Marian had never seen anything of the kind before, and she may be pardoned for thinking at that moment that a ball was the most beautiful thing in art or nature. "How very charming it is!" she exclaimed to Hilda; "it is like something out of the 'Arabian Nights!'"

"Yes," replied Hilda, "it would be pleasant enough if one had anything to

hope for from it; but there will be nothing for me, except to have that odious Glynton at my side all the night, keeping everybody else at a distance."

A carriage drove up, "Ah! that will be Miss Vivian who is come, that Ryance may put the finishing touch to her costume. It is one comfort, that she would give her ears if she could sing and dress herself into my place."

Several carriages now followed in succession; they contained those who were to perform in the opera. Lady Wollaston and her party were amongst the first guests who arrived. She made her way to Mrs. Arl's dressing-room,—for she had, as we have said, grown much more friendly with her of late. Mrs. Arl welcomed her with *empressement*. "How good you are to come up here before the bustle begins. I have been so busy helping the people who are to

act, that I fear I shall be too late myself. I hope it will go off well. How beautiful you look! and what superb diamonds! You have a colour too, which suits you wonderfully! In general, if you have a fault, it is that you are too pale."

In her heart Mrs. Arl believed that Lady Wollaston was rouged. She was rather inclined to suspect her friends of improving themselves; for she was a woman who piqued herself upon her penetration; but Lady Wollaston was too proud to think of such things. A messenger came whilst Mrs. Arl was in the full tide of her compliments to say, that her presence was requested in the green-room.

"Do come with me and give me your opinion how the theatre looks. There is only one scene set; but I painted it myself. I thought if the actors had some kind of a back-ground it would be quite sufficient."

Throwing a shawl over her shoulders, Mrs. Arl led Lady Wollaston down a private staircase into the green-room. Albert, dressed in his full costume as *Don Giovanni*, and looking dazzlingly handsome, was painting the eyebrows of his friend Carl, who was to be the *Leporello*. At the sight of Lady Wollaston, Albert's heart beat thick, and he felt strangely afraid to approach her. He forgot all about himself for the moment, and only felt how much she was superior to him, and to everyone else in the world. He stammered a few words in reply to her address; and his hand trembled so much that he could scarcely continue his occupation. It was the first time in his life that he had been thus daunted. He had seen Lady Wollaston more than once since his return; but to-night she seemed endued with some ineffable charm he had not before been

conscious of. But there was no time for emotions; the company began to rapidly arrive, and, after a few hasty directions, Mrs. Arl departed to receive her visitors, and of course Lady Wollaston accompanied her.

"How very much your cousin is improved, both in manner and appearance, since his journey."

"Do you think so?" said Mrs. Arl; "perhaps it is that you notice him more; —he seems to me much the same."

At length every one was seated in the library; the curtain drew up, and the opera began. Albert's eye discovered Lady Wollaston where she sat in the distance, and this time her presence inspired instead of unnerving him. He exerted himself to be worthy of her attention. The music was the vehicle through which he might utter all that he dared not speak. He was in superb voice; every look, and tone,

and note were all freighted with the passionate admiration she had inspired; he was intoxicated with his own adoration, and the sentiment that possessed him threw a grace and meaning into all he did, which made up in genius what the performance might lack in professional excellence. Lady Wollaston was surprised to find that she had never been so completely carried away by any music before. Poor Marian seated quite unobserved behind a pillar, was at liberty to indulge herself with as much admiration as she pleased. Albert was singing and acting for Lady Wollaston alone, and took no heed of any incidental victims to his fascinations. His Spanish costume suited him admirably. If Marian had been in love with him before, it may be fancied that seeing him thus, and hearing him sing with all his heart, that she was not likely to be disenchanted now.

The rest of the performers sung neither better nor worse than the average run of well-taught amateurs; they had all expected to make a great sensation, and to throw all the fixed stars of the opera into the shade; but they were embarrassed with their dresses, abashed at the sight of the audience, quite unable to get out of their convential drawing-room manners, and at last surprised to find how much less they achieved than they expected.

Still the affair went off extremely well for a private undertaking; it had the great merit of not lasting too long, preventing many yawns,—for people soon grow tired of looking on without the liberty of taking a part.

When the curtain dropped, the guests dispersed themselves about the galleries and the refreshment-room, waiting until the hour for their own display should arrive.

A great number of small dramas might have been seen being enacted on all sides, had any one been sufficiently disengaged from personal concerns to observe them.

"What has become of Mr. Glynton to-night?" said Mrs. Arl to Hilda, as they stood together for a moment.

"I am sure I do not know; I had almost forgotten him. I could not imagine how I came to enjoy the opera so much, it must have been owing to his absence."

"Hush," said Mrs. Arl, "are you mad? some one will overhear you: how can you be so reckless?"

Hilda's reply was arrested by the appearance of Mr. Glynton in person, dressed to look his very best. He was accompanied by several friends, whom he presented to Mrs. Arl and to Hilda.

"I am very sorry to be so late," said

he, addressing Hilda in a low voice, "but I was unavoidably detained. Will you and your sister come into the next room for an instant? I have brought something which you ought to have received yesterday."

Mrs. Arl shrugged her shoulders with a certain impatience at the request, but she did not refuse to comply.

Upon the table in a small ante-room, which was entirely deserted, lay a morocco case, which Mr. Glynton put into the hands of Hilda, saying,—

"I waited for the return of my messenger, because I had set my heart upon seeing you to-night at this ball adorned as becomes your beauty. I know that your mind is superior to female vanity, still I hope you will gratify me by appearing in these jewels, which have been re-set for you, and which are now your own."

With these words, Mr. Glynton opened the case, and displayed to Hilda's astonished gaze a superb set of sapphires and diamonds. They were the family jewels.

No woman ever was or ever will be insensible to the charms of jewelry, and Hilda's face brightened at the sight. They were the first-fruits of the advantages she had achieved by her position, and she tasted the triumph of knowing that she would be the envy of all the women of her acquaintance. There was no time for anything beyond expressions of admiration at their beauty and the good taste of their arrangement. Mr. Glynton was allowed the privilege of himself clasping on the bracelet. When they returned to the company, several gathered round Hilda and offered her their congratulations on her approaching marriage. Miss Vivian, who had exchanged her *Zerlina*

costume for a magnificent ball-dress, was furious to see a girl so inferior to her in every way, as she considered Hilda, preferred to such a brilliant fortune. She half-whispered to Hilda, as she affected to admire the jewels,—

"Well, my dear, your sapphires are indeed superb, but what a pity that you are obliged to take Glynton with them. I really feel sorry for you, in spite of your splendour,—and you know I always say what I think."

Miss Vivian had an off-hand way of saying disagreeable things, which she insisted upon calling indomitable frankness.

"But," replied Hilda, with spirit, "it is not agreeable to me to hear the man I am about to marry, spoken of in that tone; besides, you were not always of that opinion about Mr. Glynton."

"I assure you I never could endure

him; but he may think himself most fortunate in having secured you, for mamma declares he has made more offers and received more refusals than any other man she ever heard of."

"Was he ever a lover of yours?" asked Hilda, with simplicity.

Miss Vivian bit her lip: she was ready to hang herself with vexation; but she would have been comforted could she have known the shudder with which Hilda felt Mr. Glynton kiss her hand, after clasping on the bracelet.

The musicians in the ball-room were now sending forth the most inspiriting waltzes and quadrilles, and their summons was no longer to be resisted. Mrs. Arl led the way with Lord Mortlock. Lady Mortlock came next, shining in diamonds, and a whole tribe of noble and distinguished guests followed in her wake.

The whole scene was gay and brilliant in the extreme. The dancing commenced with great spirit. Mrs. Arl was in the very height of her glory, and it may be doubted whether, at that moment, she had anything to wish for in the world—a calm altitude of felicity not to be long tolerated by mortal faculties.

Glynton was, of course, in close attendance upon Hilda, who had declined dancing,—and they stood a little apart, looking on. He had been perfectly satisfied with the manner in which she had received his friends—it had been such as to reflect credit upon him. Both in manner and appearance she had shown herself worthy to preside over his house and establishment. Still Glynton was not happy. A ball-room had long ceased to be a place of triumph to him; and to-night was the first time of several

years that he had entered one. Albert and his German friend were standing together at a little distance; young, handsome, full of life and elasticity, and with the self-confidence that the rich animal life and untried strength in which they revelled made so natural, there was withal a dash of romance in their bearing which prevented it from degenerating into vulgar self-sufficiency. It would have been difficult to find two finer specimens of youthful manhood than Albert and his friend. Glynton felt his eyes compelled to gaze upon them, and to measure himself beside them. He looked at them with envy almost amounting to hatred; a sharp pang of regret darted through his heart, as he felt the dry, stranded, broken wreck he was, compared with those joyous barks so proudly setting forth in their "trim array." He

could not endure Hilda to look upon them or speak to them; and he felt a suspicion and contempt as he glanced upon her superb ornaments, and felt an unacknowledged conviction of the tie by which he held her. Yet, as he gazed upon the crowd of bright young faces, dim traditions of his youth came back across the gulf of premature old age which separated him from them. He exerted himself to be very agreeable, in the vain hope of bringing the past back to life—for a moment. Hilda only felt a deeper disgust for him; could she have known all the bitterness which had thus stirred the smouldering embers of a wasted life, she might have felt something like pity.

Marian sat alone and unnoticed amongst all these gay groups, expecting Albert to come and claim her for the promised

waltz; but Albert had forgotten all about her. After speaking for a short time to his friend Carl, she saw him turn away and approach the corner where Lady Wollaston was sitting. She followed him wistfully with her eyes; but just then Mrs. Arl chanced to see her, and recollecting that she knew nobody, brought the young German up to dance with her much against his inclination, as he desired to dance with Mrs. Arl. After this, Marian had a succession of partners who all admired her, and thought her a very nice, pretty girl; but Albert never came to claim his dance,—and what is more tantalising than to dance with everybody except *the one*, who obstinately kept aloof?

CHAPTER XII.

THE MOTH AND THE FLAME.

LADY WOLLASTON had retired to a distant part of the ball-room, away from the dancers. She would gladly have been alone. The music had taken a strange hold upon her, and given an imperious distinctness to,—

"The wishes infinite and longings vain,"

which had of late haunted her.

She was surfeited with the material comforts, and wearied of the trivial ex-

citements that surged up from day to day, passing on the time, but bringing no enjoyment with them. She had long been sick at heart of the prosperous inanity of her life, and the stupid contentment of the people around her, whose utmost aspirations seemed to be bounded to the increase of their present stock of the good things of life. All their desires heaped together, and all of them gratified, would not have satisfied her for a moment.

The music had seemed to sympathise with her, and to speak to her in a language she understood; but now that it was silent, she felt like a child sent back to its nursery, after the curtain has dropped on the last scene of the pantomime.

She was sitting in this mood when Albert approached her, divested of his Spanish costume, but still in the state of

exaltation which the music and the excitement of acting had left behind. She felt him coming before she saw him. A certain indefinable attraction drew them together, —yet Albert stood a little aloof; he did not dare to address her, and he feared to disturb the strange pleasure he felt in standing thus silently within her atmosphere. At length she turned her head to see what kept him back, and in her eye Albert saw depicted that which only a young man can understand—it is a distant ray of good-will very faintly tinging the face of the woman towards whom he is attracted, but it is a moment in their life like that which preceded Creation, when the "Spirit moved upon the face of the deep,"—a moment laden with all that follows. The two souls come as it were into presence;—the stronger will moderate, govern, torment,

or it may be destroy the other;—which will be the saint, the martyr, the fool, or the wreck, as the event may be: for in this world love is a warfare, carried on as cruelly and as fatally as any other.

Albert came forward in obedience to her look, but they were both embarrassed and seemed to have nothing to say to each other. A movement of persons rising to dance left a seat vacant next to her, of which Albert took possession. Everybody knows the influence which even a slight change of place has in disposing persons to converse confidentially; but the silence between Albert and Lady Wollaston still continued. Vexed and surprised at herself, she said with a kind of desperation,

"Are you not dancing to-night?"

"No; I never feel disposed to dance after hearing fine music."

"Nor I to talk: after music which deserves the name, any conversation sounds like discord."

"Will you permit me to be silent by your side?"

"Yes; I have no intention to drive you away?"

Another silence ensued, and yet they felt more than ever desirous to speak. At last Albert said, abruptly,

"I always feel in low spirits after hearing fine music; it seems to raise one to the entrance of an invisible world, where we see ineffable glories, and hear angels talking; and then, when it ceases, we fall down flat, to come to our senses in a ball-room full of wax lights and people in full dress, or perhaps where the common stuff of which our life consists is not so much disguised as it is here to-night!"

"And which is the reality, and which is the dream?" asked Lady Wollaston.

"I don't know; the best things in my own life have been its dreams. As a boy, and as a young man, I have been haunted by vague aspirations towards an ideal life, which some kinds of music seem to embody. If I could have realized them, my life would not have been the soiled and blotted result it is;—but one might as well try to grasp the morning mist."

Albert's voice as he spoke had a profound tone of melancholy which touched Lady Wollaston more than the words themselves; but instead of a sympathising reply, she said,—

"You performed Don Giovanni much better than I imagined you could have done. Your acting was full of the mad enthusiasm that some creatures feel whose mental powers are inferior to their organ-

ization. For the first time in my life I could listen to Don Giovanni, without thinking he was uttering blasphemies to the melody of Mozart and the accompaniment of his own song."

Albert's eyes glistened like fire-flies as he said,—

"I am glad that in singing, at least, I did not incur your displeasure."

"Far from it; I think there are great capabilities lying dormant within you."

"It is only the power of affection which can develope us," said Albert; "and from our arid rocky natures it is only the divine word of *love* that can command the limpid streams of our mind to gush out luxuriant and bright. It is only the elect of our souls that can carry us through the wilderness of life, and show us the land our dreams promise our awakening life."

"It is true, it is only so," said Lady Wollaston sadly. "But, how is it that to you this new Moses has so long delayed to appear?"

"Because the one whom I could obey either despises or misunderstands me."

"That is rather a meek speech for Don Giovanni," said Lady Wollaston, smiling.

"To-night, when I acted that gayest of cavaliers," said Albert, "I was penetrated by such a profound sense of humiliation that at one moment I could scarcely proceed. I can understand the legend of unveiled truth striking mortals insane. In Don Giovanni I seemed to recognize my own features,—and I was afraid! We men lead a life of coarse materialism, for which we plead a prescriptive right. Our perceptions are dimmed, and our very soul seems to have been trailed through

the mire; but we do not know it, until some chance brings us into the presence of some noble woman like yourself, who, by her brightness, makes us see the depths to which we have sunk. I cannot express the abject self-contempt with which we would then deny the whole of our past life,—in the wild hope thereby to cross the gulf that lies between us,—to touch, if we may, the hem of her garment, or breathe the fresh fragrance of her lily crown.—Oh, if women only knew their power,—if one such woman would stretch out her hand to me in friendship, I would be capable of any effort to be worthy of one word of approval from her!"

"There are abundance of fine sentiments afloat about women, both in prose and verse," said Lady Wollaston; "but look what the men are in real life, who have written the most eloquently! Men

act as though we were their natural enemies, and we feel by instinct that they are ours,—whenever we trust them we are sure to be overreached!"

"We all, more or less, deserve what you say of us," replied Albert, somewhat surprised by the bitterness of her remark. "But you are kept from the knowledge of evil, you may dwell for ever in clear untroubled purity; and when you show yourselves less than perfect, you make us doubt whether virtue be not indeed an empty name. We men are from our cradle plunged into the midst of toil and strife, and the temptation of fiery passions of which you cannot dream. How can you expect that we should retain our faith in a better life, when we see women, who ought to be its priests, without faith in it, and living like us, only in a weaker and fainter manner? I do not defend the

wrongs that are inflicted on women, but believe me we have as much to complain of at their hands as they can have at ours."

"And what would you have us do?" asked lady Wollaston, sarcastically. "It seems to me that you have only to get up a demand for any species of female charm or excellence, and the supply is duly manufactured and surrendered to you on payment." As she spoke her eye glanced to the spot where Hilda stood with Mr. Glynton.

"Just so," said Albert, following her eye; "I know that man better than either you or my cousin can possibly do, but she knows quite enough. How can you expect men to respect that which they may purchase?—when we see daily that no amount of worthlessness in a man can repel a girl, where there is the bribe of wordly advantages? It is enough to shake our faith in

the general run of women. Hilda is no worse than other girls, she is better than many, for she is frank and straightforward; and if she were to abdicate her place this instant, what a scramble would ensue amongst all the girls in the room to obtain it!"

Lady Wollaston did not reply. Albert's magnificent eyes seemed to emit gleams of light, and he continued in a low voice, every tone of which vibrated through her,—

"There are some women who redeem their sex, who live up to their birthright;—a woman like you is a queen, and may dispose of a thousand slaves. Sitting here in the light of your presence, I renounce all my past life. I could kneel down before you and say, teach me what I must do to be worthy to speak to you. I never before spoke to a human being as I have spoken this night to you."

Lady Wollaston's heart beat fast,—her pride was melted, and all the barriers of the conventionalism, behind which she had entrenched herself, were broken down before his voice and looks. She did not venture to meet his gaze, but after a short pause she said in a tone which she endeavoured to render steady,—

"You are under a picturesque delusion about our condition, and the untroubled element in which we dwell,—you do not know how very badly women are brought up. You are the first who ever spoke to me about what women may and ought to be; if men would only deal uprightly with us it would be better for them and for us also."

"If there be faith in man," said Albert, passionately, "I will strive after a better life; only let me be your friend. I do

not deserve that name yet, but I will do so. Every faculty I possess I consecrate to you. If I have gained any knowledge of life, and experience which can be in any way useful to you, command it. I would pour out my very soul to save you one moment's pain; surely a saint in heaven need not shrink from such lowly worship. Let me only speak to you without disguise, let me look up to you as to a friend, and purify my heart and life with your heavenly influence."

Lady Wollaston made one more effort to defend herself from the influence his words were gaining upon her. She shook her head as she replied,—

"A friend! a friend!—one would compass sea and land to obtain such a blessing; but friends do not grow up so suddenly."

"They grow long,—they are but re-

vealed suddenly. There is long premise before the day dawns, but the sun uprises in an instant. I felt drawn towards you by an irresistible impulse the first moment you appeared to me, but this morning I did not dream that I should dare to speak to you."

The ball-room had by this time become intolerably hot, and a crowd of dancers came to the spot where Albert and Lady Wollaston were sitting, in quest of a resting place.

"Shall we go into the library," said Albert; "we shall be better there."

She arose without reply, and they passed into the cool, and comparatively dimly lighted library, where card-tables had been set for those who chose to play. No one heeded them, and they sat down in the recess of one of the windows.

"There is something I have often

wished to say to you," said Lady Wollaston, at length breaking silence.

"Tell me then now what it is?"

"I have often wished you could know how much I regret that insolent speech you overheard; understand, I do not regret it because you overheard it, but because I am very sorry I made it. You behaved so well, that I mentally retracted it on the spot: I felt I had been unjust as well as insolent."

"I have a great deal to tell you about that," said Albert. "I felt that you were right in your estimate of me, and it was that which maddened me, and I cannot tell you how much it made me hate you, nor the wild, bad thoughts it roused in me; but they all vanished the moment I entered your presence again, though I rebelled against your influence, and strived to stifle it. I went abroad, and whilst

I was away, I plunged into every kind of mad and wild excess, but it was to do despite to your image which haunted me. The more I strove against your influence, the more I hated myself. When I came back you received me kindly, and at the sight of you I felt what a stupid fool I had been. To-night, when you entered with my cousin, an impulse came upon me to kneel down and worship you. You see I tell you everything. After this, can you say that my sense of your worth is of sudden growth?"

Lady Wollaston struggled no longer; all her life long she had yearned for affection; her heart was contracted with the long silence of the barren land in which she had dwelt. She could no more turn aside from the passionate homage now offered to her, than a tra-

veller in the desert fainting with thirst, could put away the cup of cold water, or stay to inquire whether it had been drawn from a poisoned well.

For a moment she paused, and then looking firmly at Albert, she gave him her hand with a gesture inexpressibly frank and noble, saying,—

"Be my friend then, I will trust you as such."

Albert bent down his head, and pressing his lips to it, said,—

"May God so deal with me, if I prove unworthy!"

A great bustle was heard—the card-tables were breaking up, and the company from the ball-room were adjourning to supper; but three of the guests were absent.

Lady Wollaston went up-stairs to her own room, and no one saw her again

that night. As she retired, she did not see another figure which was stealing softly away. Poor Marian, weary and disquieted, and obliged at last to relinquish all hopes that Albert would come and claim his engagement, had refused to dance more, and made her escape to the library, where she hoped to be quiet, and at liberty to be miserable in peace; but as she entered, she saw two persons in earnest conversation at the further end of the room. Albert bent down to kiss Lady Wollaston's hand. Marian stood one moment, and then withdrew as softly as she had entered.

Albert watched until the last fold of Lady Wollaston's dress disappeared upon the stairs, and was turning away, when he ran against Glynton.

"You seem to have made some progress with your proud lady — I was

watching you in that corner. How do you find her?"

"She is an angel!" said Albert, impetuously.

"And how many men have thought so before you, my boy?" rejoined Glynton, with a cynical laugh that hissed in Albert's ears like water upon red-hot iron. He rushed into the open air to cool his burning head with the night breeze, and to look at the light which streamed from one window, which he could well distinguish amid the glare which illuminated the whole building.

Albert, to do him justice, had been quite in earnest in all he had said and professed that evening to Lady Wollaston; but it must be confessed that he was dreadfully fatigued by the exercise of so much eloquence, though he would never have owned such a thing to himself. He

returned to the house, and went up-stairs to his own room, where he flung himself on the bed, and slept long and heavily until late the following morning.

CHAPTER XIII.

When Marian left the library that night, it was to take refuge in her bedroom.

She looked round with a strange bewildered idea that the misery she felt must be a dream, but it did not vanish. She sat down and buried her head in the pillow of the couch at the foot of the bed; she did not weep, but hard, gasping, sobs broke from her bosom, and there was no one to see the look of agony upon that young face.

She was roused by the entrance of Mrs.

Ryance, who looked at her with curious and inquiring eyes.

"I am very tired, Mrs. Ryance, and not accustomed to such late hours and so much dancing. I came up to bed instead of going to supper. Nobody will miss me."

Mrs. Ryance was quite of that opinion, and stiffly offered her services to assist Marian to undress. The sight of this woman, with her cold, fish-like, gray eyes was intolerable, but it was fortunate she had come, as otherwise Marian might not have had the energy to rouse herself.

"I danced a great deal, but I think I owed my partners to the pretty dress Coralie made for me. I did not see any I liked so well."

Marian said this to break the frigid spell that surrounded Mrs. Ryance, and to divert suspicion from the cause of her own

disconsolate looks, but Mrs. Ryance only thought her "a very silly young lady," and replied,

"Indeed, mem."

Marian made no more efforts at conversation, but lay down in her bed quite persuaded that she should not close her eyes all night; but although very miserable, she was also very tired, and dropped asleep in an incredibly short time. It is a great blessing to be young; at that period we can sleep even in the midst of our sorrows.

Marian did not hear Hilda come to bed, but the next morning when she awoke it was with a sense of heavy trouble, and a dull leaden pain at her heart. At first she could not recollect what it was, but in an instant as at the touch of a spring, the recollection of the previous evening, —the scene in the library,—flashed upon

her, and for a moment she felt as though she must be suffocated; tears began to fall from her eyes, when suddenly she remembered that the traces of them would betray her, and the idea of being exposed to remark, or to the suspicion of their cause, was too intolerable to be borne; by a resolute effort she crushed back her tears to their fountain, and swallowed down the gasping sobs which convulsed her bosom.

She sat up in bed perfectly still, almost turned to stone by the repression she had exercised upon her emotion.

When the spasm of passion had a little subsided, and the tension of her nerves relaxed, she arose and drank off a large tumbler of cold water.

Everybody knows that to get up and dress oneself breaks the spell of many an unhappy fancy which has made our bed a place of torment.

The hour was not early, but all the household were late, and the servants were only just down when Marian descended.

A house always looks thoroughly demoralised after a large party. The wrecks of pleasure look very mournful, or rather, unlovely, for forlornness and discomfort are the prevailing sentiments,—withered festoons, naked tables, and overturned benches.

The housemaids had not yet begun their work of regeneration, and there was no place of refuge for Marian. She wandered into the garden, but that also was disorganised by the festivity of the previous night: the gravel was cut up by the carriages, the grass trampled down, and the coloured lamps which had illuminated the park, looked very dismal in the morning sun.

Marian turned away in great disgust, and entered a walk in a distant part of the grounds, where no signs of the revel had penetrated. Here the pure fresh dewy air of a fine autumn morning, the odours that rose from the moist earth and the fallen leaves, the clear song of birds, and the pure, pearly, morning light, not yet glowing with the garishness of day, might (one would think), have diverted any heart from its sadness.

Alas! the beauties of nature lie on the outside of us, whilst our own sorrows, real or fancied, all lie within our own skin, and are much more real and close to us, than the finest sights in the world. No doubt if they would only take their stand on the outside with the rest of the world, we should be able to rise above them and think of them serenely and soberly according to their merits; but whilst they keep

their places within our bosom, they fill up all the room, and keep us from looking far forth and seeing "what we else had seen." So Marian got very little comfort from the fine morning, or the voice of Nature, or anything else. She walked mechanically on, thinking of the walk she had taken with Albert before breakfast the last time she was here; every look, every tone, every word he had addressed to her, came back to her memory like sweet poison. It is the most unprofitable and enervating of indulgences, to try to reproduce past emotions by encouraging barren memories.

The breakfast-bell sounded in the midst of her reveries, and she hastened back towards the house.

As she went along she schooled herself how she should meet Albert, so as to betray no emotion.

Like all scenes rehearsed for an emergency, it was perfectly useless.

Very few of the guests had assembled when she arrived. Albert was apparently engrossed in preparing a slice of toast, and did not seem aware of her presence; he did not even say good morning, though he glanced anxiously at the door every time it opened.

Mr. Arl greeted Marian very kindly, and made room for her beside him; he talked merrily to her about the ball and many other things, and poor Marian appeared to listen, thankful that she was not expected to answer, and drank her tea to keep down her tears.

Mrs. St. George came in when breakfast was about half over, dressed in the very prettiest and freshest of morning toilettes; though her movements were all noiseless and graceful, she still contrived effectually

to monopolise the attention of all the men at table, except Albert, who continued to glance restlessly towards the door. At last Lady Wollaston appeared, and, thanks to the presence of Mrs. St. George, no one noted her entrance. A certain expression of softness and femininess shone in her eyes and gave an indescribable charm to her whole countenance, that made her look perfectly beautiful. At first she seemed undecided where to sit, but Albert gave one quick glance of entreaty, and she took an unoccupied chair beside him. He stooped to pick up a handkerchief she had dropped, and perhaps it might be that exertion which brought the colour so vividly to his face.

Neither Albert nor Lady Wollaston spoke much to each other, but Marian felt the secret sympathy that made an atmosphere round them; she did not lose a

single look or gesture, for she was fascinated to watch them, though she would have given the world to have been able not to see them.

A great deal of laughing and chatting went on about the ball and the opera. It was a merry noisy breakfast, though all were secretly listening for the individual compliments due to them.

After breakfast Albert and Arl had to go to Manchester.

"I have a commission for you," said Lady Wollaston to Albert, "if it will not be troublesome."

"You know there is nothing in the world I would not do to give you one moment's pleasure," replied he in a tremulous voice.

The colour mounted to her forehead, and for a moment she seemed to forget what she was about to say; — his eyes were fixed upon her.

"It is this ring," said she, recovering herself; "the stone has become loose and needs to be reset; will you leave it at some jeweller's?"

She took a superb ring from her hand; the warmth lingered still upon it, and thrilled through him as he took it.

"I will bring it to you again this evening."

"Will you come here again to-day?" she asked with an involuntary expression of surprise and pleasure.

"Where one's treasure is there does one strive to be also."

"Come, Albert, the gig is here; are you ready?" said Mr. Arl.

Albert turned abruptly, almost rudely from Lady Wollaston, but as he passed Marian heard him murmur something in a suppressed tone, as if the words had been rather bitten than spoken. No one besides

herself had remarked this scene, as there was a general breaking up of the company.

Some of the guests were departing, and those who were to remain dispersed themselves in various directions in search of amusement and occupation.

The ladies betook themselves to the library,—where they wrote notes, or looked over portfolios of prints, or dipped into the annuals which in those days were beginning to be in vogue. Most of the young ladies however brought out their work-boxes, and made believe to work at knitting purses, making chains, or embroidering bags. Miss Vivian, who considered herself, and wished to be considered by others, as a *bel esprit,* and having lost the hope of captivating Mr. Glynton by her propriety,—relapsed into a French novel, in which she appeared engrossed. Marian, who scarcely knew any one, sat silently and sadly apart,

finishing her cushion, and wondering how she had ever found Carrisford delightful. Mrs. Arl and Hilda were engaged elsewhere, speeding the departing guests.

Lady Wollaston had retired to her own room, being in no humour to keep company with idle women and chattering girls. Sir Frederick, her husband, was called northward to attend a court-martial, and she had agreed to stay at Carrisford until his return.

After a while, pretty Mrs. St. George, who had been holding a consultation with Coralie, in her dressing-room, upon what she was to wear at dinner made her appearance; and immediately a group gathered round her chair to discuss what lace was likely to be worn the next season,—for Mrs. St. George was acknowledged to be high authority on all matters of dress and fashion. Of course they passed in review

all the people of the previous evening, which was an inexhaustible subject; and Miss Vivian, who much desired to get up an intimacy with Mrs. St. George, made herself remarkable for her satirical observations on poor Marian, who was sitting as she chose to believe out of hearing; she was a clever girl and not without sense, —but she had no kindness of heart, and Marian was the peculiar object of her spite. She could not endure to see her so domesticated at Carrisford, which was a position she would well have liked for herself; and she hated Marian with that peculiar instinct which enables women to take such wonderful antipathies to each other. With the sharp instinct of malice, she had detected Marian's *penchant* for Albert; and she felt provoked that such a little insignificant girl should presume to look up to any one she thought worthy

to flirt with herself,—and it must be confessed that Albert had paid Miss Vivian devoted attention during the rehearsals. She also resented as an insult that Marian, without either fortune or fashion to give her a claim, should intrude into a set to which she belonged.

Miss Vivian repeated with embellishments all the little disparaging remarks which she asserted her partner, Lord Allanson, had made of Marian whilst she was their *vis-à-vis* during a quadrille, and by criticising her dress and mode of dancing, she contrived to produce the impression that Marian was a young person whom Mrs. Arl invited out of kindness, "she was such a dear, good-natured creature;" whilst her husband was "so distressingly liberal in his politics, that he would rejoice to patronize a little person like Marian, to show his contempt for rank,"—naïvely adding that

some people of the name of Withers kept a grocer's shop in Bolton.

Mrs. St. George, trifling and vain, was good-natured, and did not like this dead set upon Marian; besides, as she had superintended her dress, she knew that it was not open to Miss Vivian's criticism. She roused herself to put Miss Vivian in her proper place, much in the way that a large fish would swallow up a little one. She began to give an account of a court ball she had attended a short time previously, at the Tuilleries, and gave several pieces of secret gossip about the great people who had been there, with descriptions of their dress and their jewels, which threw Miss Vivian completely into the shade, as Mrs. St. George intended that it should. Meanwhile, Marian sat sadly thinking upon her own sorrows, and the great happiness of Lady

Wollaston, who seemed to her like a being of a superior nature.

There is a great humility in true love. Marian had no idea of blaming Albert for his preference, or of setting herself up as a rival; she would not for the world have allowed that it was possible for Albert to do wrong; but she thought pitifully how miserable his attachment to Lady Wollaston would make him,—she being a married woman. Poor Marian's modest hopes then took another direction; she thought that perhaps Albert would make her his friend, and how patient and sympathising she would be in all his sorrows. She began to think she had been presumptous in ever expecting Albert to love her; but that if he would make her his friend and allow her to comfort him when he was in sorrow, it would be a destiny scarcely less enviable.

Then she thought that if ever the world should come to speak ill of Lady Wollaston how much she could sympathise with her, and how she would love her and be her friend too, if Lady Wollaston would only permit her.

It must be confessed that in all Marian's dreams Albert was always to come back to her at last, and find her so faithful and constant, that he should not be able to help loving her in return, and in the meanwhile she regarded Lady Wollaston with the most romantic and angelic sympathy. She was too ignorant and too simple-minded to believe that a married woman could be a serious rival; she would have felt far more uneasy to see Miss Vivian or Miss Arundel preferred by Albert.

She had now again ample foundation for "castles in the air," more delightful even than her former ones. The glow of

devotedness made her for the moment insensible to the pain she still endured, and she determined to strive more than ever to become worthy of Albert, and to earn his affections, and for this end to look at Lady Wollaston as into a mirror, to discover the qualities he most admired, and she pleased herself with the idea that perhaps some day he might say to her,

"Marian, you are like Lady Wollaston!"

CHAPTER XIV.

Glynton and his three friends arrived to luncheon, and after luncheon they were to ride. Miss Vivian, who was a splendid horsewoman, was not without hope that Captain Beacham, a gray-whiskered, bald, elderly gentleman, who looked an incarnation of port wine and good living, or else Sir Cornelius Fitz-Matching, a cruel-looking, dust-complexioned man of fifty, might be seduced into following Glynton's example, and make her an offer. It was quite indifferent to her which of the two she married, she

would very thankfully have accepted either of them.

Marian begged to be left at home, for which, in her heart, Mrs. Arl was very glad, although she was too good-natured to let it appear.

The party set off in high spirits, and Marian, as she stood watching them from the library-window, heard the sound of their voices and laughter borne back upon the wind, when they were half-way down the avenue. She felt very desolate all alone in that great house, and those fine rooms. She was in the reaction which a glow of enthusiasm generally leaves behind, and she sat down in a corner of the sofa and cried very heartily, for no particular cause except that of feeling very miserable. When her tears ceased, her heart was much lighter, as it always is at her age, when "the clouds" do not "return again after

the rain." She wrote a long letter to Aunt Alice and her father, with a full account of all she had done since she left them. She tried to read, but she could not keep her eyes fixed upon the lines.

At last the party returned.

"Come up-stairs with me, Marian," said Hilda, looking into the room; "I have something to tell you."

"Dear Hilda, are you ill? you look so strange."

"Do I?" said Hilda, closing the door; "well, it is no great wonder, for Glynton has been plaguing me all the time we have been out to fix the day, and as all my things are ready, and there really is nothing to wait for, I had no excuse. You will not leave me till it is all over!"

"Hilda, you will be miserable! do not go on with this match—it will be quite wicked!"

"No, no! do not try to persuade me, it is too late now to draw back! perhaps I shall not hate him so very much after I am once married."

"But think what it will be to be obliged to live always with that man!"

"Do not talk of it," said Hilda, shuddering; "if I drew back now, what would become of me? I could never show my face again!"

"And when have you said it shall be?"

"This day fortnight," replied Hilda, desperately; "and I wish I had never been born, or that I might die before the day came! I do not believe that there is anybody in the world so miserable as I am!"

"Will you let me tell Mr. Arl? he is very kind, and so clever that I am sure he could help you."

"Not for the world!" said Hilda, drying her tears; "I must marry Glynton now I

have promised—I should never be looked upon again if I drew back; but that grand house and park, which I thought would be such a fine thing, seems now like a prison when I think of it; and I do not even believe that Glynton is a person of as much consequence as we all thought him; but that cannot be helped now!"

"But recollect that it will be imprisonment for life," said Marian.

"I must go on now;" replied Hilda, beginning to arrange her hair, "and now do not let us talk of it any more; I shall try not to think about it. Let us make haste to go down-stairs—Glynton will wonder what is become of me, and I should not like him to suspect anything. He has bought me, and paid for me!" added she, bitterly.

There was a knock at the door, and Mrs. Arl entered.

"I wish that you two would not be always together;" said she, half pettishly, "I cannot amuse all those people downstairs. It is stupid having such a company of women in the house; they all go to-morrow—that is one comfort; but I wish you would attend to them whilst they stay. What can have possessed Lady Wollaston to shut herself up in her own room? I hope she is not offended at anything. I must go and be civil to her a little, and make an excuse for riding out and leaving her. Everybody seems to have been charmed with the ball last night;" said she, turning back again from the door, "the Marquis of Headly has been paying me all manner of compliments whilst we have been out, till I could scarcely attend to my horse; he is staying dinner, and if Arl only brings the people he promised, we shall have a most stylish dinner-party

to-day. I hope that Lady Wollaston's cousin, Mr. Cunningham, will come, for I have heard that he is a most distinguished person, and it would be a credit to have him staying here."

"He will belong to Marian, if he comes," said Hilda.

"By the way, Miss Withers, I have heard something about you."

Marian looked rather alarmed.

"I take some of the credit to myself, for you were so perfectly well dressed, and you looked charming; one gentleman was raving about you to Arl, and asked him the most particular questions about your family and where you live. I saw he was struck with you last night and I am not often mistaken in those things. Guess who it is."

"I really have no idea," replied Marian, feeling rather flattered in spite of herself.

"It is Mr. Connelly, a barrister; you

danced with him two or three times last night,—a tall, light-haired, good-tempered looking young man."

"Oh," said Marian in a disappointed tone, "he was not interesting at all; no woman, I should think, would care about pleasing him."

"Never mind about his not being interesting; he is of an excellent family and is beginning to make a figure at the bar. I told Arl to be sure and invite him to come to-day; he is visiting in the neighbourhood. But what is the matter with Hilda?" said she suddenly.

"Nothing," replied Hilda; "Glynton will tell you: give him an opportunity of speaking to you. Let us go down-stairs, this room is so hot; it makes me quite ill. I cannot bear to hear Nancy talking on in that manner," said she to Marian as they went down-stairs arm-in-arm.

The party assembled in the drawing-room

was extremely gay. Mr. Arl had returned and brought with him Mr. Cunningham and two Italian gentlemen, whom Mr. Cunningham had introduced to him. Albert had brought his friend Carl and two other young Germans, Mrs. Arl had invited several persons on the preceding evening to come and dine without ceremony; and as often happens, this unceremonious gathering was much pleasanter than parties *prepense* are apt to be. Nobody brought any preliminary ice to be thawed, but began to amuse themselves at once; even Mr. Glynton caught the infection, and partly from the force of example and partly from the self-complacency of having induced Hilda to fix the day, he rose to a point of hilarity which he had seldom reached of late years.

Marian was very glad to see Mr. Cunningham: she would not be so lonely now that he was come, but it afforded no

comfort in any other respect. Albert took no notice of her, but attached himself to Lady Wollaston's side as soon as it was decently possible to do so, and Marian saw her face brighten at his approach.

In the evening there were charades and proverbs acted with great spirit by the foreigners present. Music followed; the Germans sang some of their national songs, and the Italians gave some Neapolitan airs and gondola songs. Suddenly Mrs. Arl struck up a spirited waltz and every one was instantly on the floor, whirling round in an intoxication of spirits. Albert having conducted Lady Wollaston, who had been his partner to a seat, went up to Marian who was standing near.

"Let us have a turn together Miss Withers; you are so much sought after that it is difficult to find you disengaged."

Poor Marian could not help feeling very

happy; it was so much more than she had ventured to expect!

"How very well you waltz!" said Albert, absently; "you are one of the very few with whom I can enjoy the mere pleasure of dancing."

His eyes were incessantly directed towards Lady Wollaston; he could keep away from her no longer.

"I see that your partner is ready to assassinate me for keeping you so long," said he to Marian after their next turn: "before I resign you, however, will you allow me to introduce my friend Carl to you?—he has requested me to do so. He is one of the best fellows in the world, and my particular friend, if that be any recommendation."

Marian stammered some reply, and Albert fetched Carl and introduced him in due form. Carl had not the least objec-

tion to dance with Marian, but Albert had invented all about his request for an introduction, in order that he might disembarrass himself of Marian without seeming to leave her too abruptly.

This done, he returned to his station beside Lady Wollaston, fully persuaded that he had done his duty by the rest of the company, and that no one could with any justice reproach him with being too much engrossed by her.

He stood beside her chair feeling quite ready to kill everybody else at whom she looked, or to whom she addressed a word.

This amiable frame of mind was excited by Mr. Cunningham, who, all unconscious of the thunder-cloud that lowered in Albert's eyes at his approach, actually sat down on the other side of her.

Lady Wollaston, if the truth must be told, was not particularly delighted with

his arrival, for he interrupted a very interesting conversation, half metaphysical, half sentimental, and disturbed the "mutual atmosphere" which encircled them; but as she really liked her cousin, and entertained a great respect for him, she received him graciously notwithstanding.

After the reciprocal inquiries which pass between relations who have not seen each other for some time, Mr. Cunningham said,

"I wish you would let me bespeak your notice and good will for a young friend of mine who is here. She is very young, and is quite lost amongst all these dashing people, but I am much mistaken if you will not find yourself repaid for any kindness you may show her. I spent some time recently with her father, who is a man of great genius in his way."

"Is the daughter clever?"

"Perhaps at first you will see nothing in her, for she has lived in such an entirely different class of people to those you move amongst; but you have the gift of looking below the surface, and there you will see a very fine nature, which, according to my creed, is the substance out of which genius and all other precious gifts proceed."

"You make me curious to become acquainted with her; where is she?"

"I will bring her presently; and recollect that even if you are disappointed, I have made an appeal to your good-nature, which I never knew to fail where there was a kind action to be done."

"You are like all the rest of men," said Lady Wollaston impatiently, "you fancy that women can do nothing good unless they are bribed to it by compliments."

"Believe me, I did not think of paying you a compliment; I was stating a simple fact."

"Well," she replied, "go and fetch the young lady, and I will see what I can do for her."

Mr. Cunningham departed, and returned with Marian, who, from a variety of emotions was scarcely able to stand. She felt so conscious herself, that she fancied Lady Wollaston must also be aware of the thoughts that had so recently passed in her heart.

Her enthusiastic good intentions were disturbed by the polite highly-bred manner in which she was received by Lady Wollaston.

Marian's imagination had traversed the conventional space that lay between them, and now that she was brought face to face with her, she felt thrown back to an infi-

nite distance from the Lady Wollaston of her reveries.

Her modesty, however, told in her favour, for she was so engrossed with the idea of Lady Wollaston, that she did not bestow a single thought on the impression she might produce herself.

It is difficult, however well inclined people may be, to begin a spontaneous conversation on the moment of introduction, at least it is difficult for English people, and after a few sentences, the conversation stood still. Fortunately Marian was claimed for a waltz. Mr. Cunningham still remained.

"I like that young girl," said Lady Wollaston: "she has no style it is true, but she has something better. She is perfectly modest, and without any pretension. Some day she will make a charming woman."

Mr. Cunningham looked very much pleased; he would willingly have prolonged the conversation about Marian, but Albert's patience was quite exhausted.

"I think," said he, addressing himself in a constrained tone to Lady Wollaston, "that you were good enough to promise me a game of chess; the board is arranged, and awaits your pleasure."

Mr. Cunningham was slightly surprised, but understanding that this was not a propitious moment to talk of Marian, he left the sofa, and joined a group of gentlemen who were discussing the Game Laws.

"You were very rude to my cousin; what had he done to offend you?"

"Nothing; I have no right to complain. I have no right to be rude to any one. If he had not been your cousin, I should have said that he wished

to monopolise you — that it was impertinent to wish you to annoy yourself with a little insignificant girl who has nothing to recommend her, and whom my cousins picked up I don't know where. To me she seems destitute of common sense as well as of all pretensions to beauty,—a more ordinary, common-place girl could scarcely be found," said Albert, impetuously.

He did not dare to abuse Mr. Cunningham, as he would have been thankful to do, so he fell upon poor Marian instead; every word of disparagement lavished upon her being mentally intended for Mr. Cunningham.

"How vehement you are upon such an inoffensive little thing; besides, it seems to me that I saw you dancing with her just now, and looking all manner of polite admiration."

"I might not remain here all the evening. I was obliged to dance with some one, and I chose her, precisely because she was the most insignificant."

"I think you are quite wrong," said Lady Wollaston, coldly; "she strikes me as being infinitely superior in every way to that superfinely vulgar Miss Vivian, who is to me perfectly detestable, with her airs of a would-be woman of fashion."

In his heart Albert quite agreed with Lady Wollaston, and he was mortified that she should think him deficient in good taste.

"All women are now become mere shadows to me," said he; "I am scarcely conscious of their presence. I felt cross, because your cousin and Miss Withers interrupted our conversation, and now it has drifted away until we are like to be stranded upon Miss Vivian! Will you

forgive me, and let us have our game of chess?"

"The forgiveness, yes; but the chess, no. You see the people are moving to go away."

Albert bit his lip, and felt as if he had been most unjustly used by destiny; nevertheless, he would have felt really sorry could he have known the use that had been made of his petulant words.

Miss Vivian, as we have said, hated Marian, and as ill-luck would have it, she had been near enough to overhear Albert's remarks about her, and when she also heard Lady Wollaston's opinion of herself, she determined to visit her spite upon Marian. She went at once in search of her, and then sitting down beside her, began in a frank, friendly manner, to talk to her.

"Where have you been hiding yourself all day, my dear Miss Withers, and

how came you not to be of the riding-party? Do you not think that Mrs. Arl (although the best woman in the world) is apt to be sadly led away by mere style and fashion? To be sure, before her marriage she was not at all in good society; she raised herself entirely by her stroke of good luck in captivating Mr. Arl, and she is about to sacrifice Hilda in the same way. Those *marriages de convenance* must give men such a low opinion of our sex. For my part I agree with Jean Jacques, *que la vertu c'est le dévouement!* Do not you?"

Marian modestly replied that she had never read Rousseau.

"Ah, well, I will lend you a volume of the 'Héloise' to-morrow if you like, only do not let any one see you reading it. By the way, what do you think of *le beau Albert?* He is a *méchante langue,*

and no friend of yours, so beware of him. I heard him saying shamefully severe things of you just now to Lady Wollaston. I tell you, because I think it a great advantage to women to know exactly what is said of them, for of course we cannot judge by what is said to us. Albert and I are very old friends; indeed I get quite angry at him sometimes for the nonsense he talks to me, but I never believe what young men say. Look at Hilda, in her white muslin and moss-rose! What an affectation of simplicity, when everybody knows she is marrying for money! Dear me, I hope I have not annoyed you; you look quite *défaite!*"

"I am a little fatigued with dancing," said poor Marian, who was writhing under Miss Vivian's infliction; "but every one is going away, so I will wish Mrs. Arl good-night."

CHAPTER XV.

LADY WOLLASTON retired to her room, and after taking off her dress and ornaments and loosening the tresses of her long hair, dismissed her maid, and wrapping her dressing-gown round her, sat down to indulge in a luxurious reverie upon the strange new happiness which had sprung up for her.

Lady Wollaston had not the least idea of falling in love, or of indulging in any sentiment "unbecoming a married woman." She knew not what she did when she permitted herself to idealize the charact[redacted]

of Albert. He had spoken to her in words that agreed with her own feelings, and she questioned no further, but accepted them for all she thought they meant. She was not the first, nor will she be the last woman, deceived by words, or rather by the exaggerated meaning they appear to bear.

Lady Wollaston, — cold, proud, self-controlled as she appeared,—was precisely the last person in the world to be able to stem the lava torrent of strong passion, should it ever chance to cross her path.

She had nothing to which in the day of temptation she could turn for strength. She had never heard one word of real strong principle of right and wrong. She had received what is called "a fine education,"—an education of accomplishments and a knowledge of the main facts taught in history and geography: a smattering of

science, diluted down to the female level; she could speak French and Italian, and knew something of Latin; had read many books of travels and biography, and as novels had been prohibited, she had gone through a great deal of the flat and uninteresting literature containing neither the instruction of history nor the amusement of fiction, but which occupies the debatable land. And what was she to find here to strengthen her in the evil day that she might stand!

She was not religious beyond the vague natural aspiration of an affectionate heart, which would at any time have infinitely preferred a human object. She had never lived amongst religious people, only amongst decent ones. Going to Church once upon Sunday, when nothing very particular happened to prevent it, was the sum of all the religion she had been

taught, and everybody knows the amount of clear, practical instruction in their daily duties, and the strong counsel against the difficulties and temptations which beset all who come into the world, which people hear when they go to Church.

Lady Wollaston's education had appealed to her egoism in different forms; but to no one high quality. The regulation of her mind had been left to chance, and the regulation of her conduct to the example of good society, and her own taste to avoid all that was singular or unbecoming.

She was at this time about six-and-twenty. She had lived much in the world, and possessed a practical knowledge of the manners and customs of good society; she knew perfectly well what to do and say upon all occasions, and was quite equal to any of the social emergencies

that might arise in matters of *convenance.*

She had plenty of good sense, as well as good taste. But as we said before, she was eaten up with *ennui.* She had an unoccupied heart, and nothing to do; and of all the possible combinations, none in all humanity offer so fruitful a field for the labours of the "Father of evil."

Marian retired to rest that night thinking herself very miserable; Lady Wollaston thought herself very happy; but could they have foreseen the end likely to ensue from their respective beginnings, they might possibly have been of a different opinion.

Everybody assembled round the breakfast-table the next morning, to all appearance much the same as usual. It is startling when we think how completely we are hidden, even from those who are close

beside us. We all dwell in an invisible world, and what we appear to others is not *us* at all.

When the letters came, there was one for Lady Wollaston, which troubled the serenity of her contentment.

It was from her husband, and announced that he should return home the next day, accompanied by several friends, for a few days' shooting.

Lady Wollaston felt a sensation as of cold iron entering into her—to have to return home so suddenly, when she had securely calculated that yesterday was to usher in many other days even better than itself!

"No bad news!" said Albert, who had been anxiously watching her countenance.

"No," replied she, "it's nothing, except that I must return home immediately. Sir Frederick writes me word, that he is

coming back to-morrow, and bringing a quantity of company along with him."

"And you call that nothing!" said Albert bitterly, and looking down; "but it is nothing to you; you have many friends, and are sure to find them every where. You can afford to go away, and I was a fool to think you could regret it."

He seemed entirely engrossed in separating the leg of a partridge; but he split the beautiful *Sévre* plate with the emphasis he employed.

"Albert, you are very unjust, and extremely rude," said Lady Wollaston coldly, although she was secretly not ill pleased. "I certainly calculated upon remaining here some days longer; but I cannot be from home when my husband is bringing his friends. I was about to ask you to dine with us to-morrow, and remain over

Sunday; but I fear you would find matter for cavil in that."

"Oh!" said Albert, his face becoming radiant with pleasure, "how heavenly good you are! I thought I was losing you altogether—and it was like death."

"Well, then, you will come?"

"I am like a child, I wish to-morrow were here; but I shall come here to-night and not find you; and all day to-morrow you will not be here. Why must you go to-day?"

"Because the carriage must go to-

home to your own environments, amongst which I am a stranger. You will feel differently towards me there, and perhaps regret the kindness you have shown to me."

"Albert, you are a child! do not let me believe you in earnest; have you not asked me to be your friend?—have I not called you my friend?—and would you wish me to believe that a *friend* is such a transient blessing—such a perishable treasure? I have heard it always said that friendship is better than gold; but you seem to think it is even less to be relied upon."

"No, no; but how can you help feeling yourself superior to me, and seeing me as I am? it is that which I dread."

"I am not a child, nor even a very young person. What I value to-day I shall value to-morrow. I shall never change towards you from caprice; if you were to

prove yourself unworthy of the friendship I have given you, it would be the greatest grief that could happen to me."

"I would rather have your friendship than the passionate love of all the rest of your sex," said Albert fervently; "you have opened a new life to me. I shall worship you in absence even more than when you are present! You are my religion! But why are you leaving me? —it is not yet time for you to depart."

"I must find Mrs. Arl, to tell her of this change of plans. I do not intend to invite her for to-morrow; but at least I must wish her good-bye."

"And me too," said Albert; "promise me five minutes more before you go."

"You must find them then. I shall order the carriage to be round at twelve: it is now eleven — we are the last at the table."

Mrs. Arl was perfectly indifferent whether Lady Wollaston went or stayed—perhaps on the whole it was quite as convenient she should go; but she expressed the most polite regret, and when she heard of all the company expected, she sincerely hoped that Lady Wollaston would invite her to meet them.

"You will, perhaps, come over for a couple of days during this invasion," said Lady Wollaston carelessly; "I will send you word by Albert."

"But there is Miss Withers," said Mrs. Arl, "who is remaining with us until after the wedding; Hilda insists upon having her for bridesmaid. They were schoolfellows, and Hilda is very fond of her. I confess I do not understand women having those desperate friendships for each other."

"Miss Withers? that will be the young lady my cousin introduced to me last

night; of course she will come with you."

"Good-bye, Miss Withers," said she, going to the embrasure of the window, where Marian was sitting apparently absorbed in a book, "I trust we shall become better acquainted by-and-by; will you come and see me next week? I shall write to Mrs. Arl to fix the day, and we must try to persuade my cousin, Mr. Cunningham, to come too."

Marian coloured with surprise and embarrassment, but Lady Wollaston had passed on without waiting for her reply.

This invitation was given in the hearing of Miss Vivian, but not extended to her though she would have been extremely happy to accept it.

In the absence of more eligible persons she had been employing her time in the endeavour to captivate Mr. Cunningham;

but he, cold, and almost sarcastic, had confined himself within the limits of the strictest necessity of politeness.

She felt that she made no way with him. To add to her mortifications she saw her "Mordecai the Jew," which was Marian, preferred before her. As they sauntered in the garden that morning, Mr. Cunningham walked beside Marian and continued to monopolise her entirely, and Miss Vivian had not even the comfort of knowing what it was that he was saying so earnestly.

"Are you inclined for a ramble through the wood this morning, Miss Withers?" said Mr. Cunningham; "I am sure it will do us a great deal more good than to saunter up and down these walks. You need to have your nerves braced after all this dissipation, or you will go home looking

like a ghost. Come along, and let us see if we can lose ourselves."

"I think it is the chance of doing so which makes me love a wood," said Marian; "a park would be just as charming if it were not for the palings, which we know will keep us within measured bounds."

"Yet the limitations exist everywhere," said Mr. Cunningham, "only we do not perceive them. When we have once found them, the charm is broken. But tell me how you are going on here? Do you find this mode of life as charming as ever."

"You see things have fallen out differently this time," replied Marian blushing; "when I was here before we were quieter, there was no company, and—," she paused, "I had Albert then all to myself," was her thought.

Mr. Cunningham read her thought, and winced a little. It was very natural she should think so, but he did not like it nevertheless.

"Well, go on and tell me everything. I know that the kaleidoscope never repeats itself exactly."

"If I am dissatisfied, the fault must lie in myself," said Marian; "there are so many fine people here that I feel out of place amongst them. At times,—for instance, when listening to the music the other night,—I was quite happy and forgot everything, and then I fell down into myself again, felt shut up in my own concerns and able to be mortified because nobody took any notice of me. It was very pitiful, and yet I could not help it. Why can we not live up to the exalted feelings which fine music stirs up within us? Are they real, or are they only fancies?"

Marian did not quite tell the truth in her metaphysics, and Mr. Cunningham knew perfectly well that this general dissatisfaction came from a special cause; he half smiled as he replied,—

"There is no emotion nor aspiration that has not somewhere its realisation; not, perhaps, in the square formal resemblance by which a house is built after the plan of its elevation, but all aspirations symbolise some reality; but you will not understand this yet. Tell me whether you continue to like the way of life here as much as when we last talked about it?"

"It ought to be superior to any other that I know, for it possesses the result of so much labour. For instance, it seems quite natural to be rich; to need money, or to be anxious about it, belongs to a different station altogether; here there seem to be no cares or anxieties. That which

has made the labour of a whole life to some great man, is here melted down to form the amusement of a few moments. I felt this very much yesterday, when I saw a party of girls looking over a portfolio of splendid engravings after the old masters; they just looked at them and pronounced some to be 'pretty,' some to be 'ugly,' but they scarcely thought of what they were seeing,—and now the portfolio stands in the library, and no one seems to care about it at all. It frightens me to see this waste,—nothing is of any value here,—the people seem to think themselves superior to anything else in the world, and none of those I have seen strike me as having any right to think this, except Lady Wollaston."

Mr. Cunningham smiled.

"You have," said he, "hit upon the secret charm of this mode of life; the

fruition of ends and means, the quiet enjoyment of the results of other men's labours, the existence that is fertilised by the riches of many other conditions flowing into it. I am of course speaking of this mode of life in a much higher degree, the intellectual and material perfection of which is only faintly shadowed forth in what you see here,—as superior to Carrisford as Carrisford is in some respects to Borrow Clough and our friend Mr. Wilcox. Carrisford will do for a type, although it is beset by the sin of vulgarity. You felt pained to see those prints serve for the amusement of idle girls; there is always a sense of desecration, when what has been the noble labour of others, the work into which they have distilled their LIFE, is degraded to be a mere ornament or an amusement. This is the danger of a life entirely exempt from the difficulties

through which a man has to toil and wrestle upwards; they can feel small sympathy with the labour of art, and are prone to consider it a mere luxury—an appendage to SELF."

"There must be something fearfully enticing in the good things of this world," said Marian, "when we see everybody willing to make such great sacrifices for the sake of them."

"Your friend Hilda, for instance?"

"It is not so much for the sake of the things themselves as for what they signify in the estimation of society, that Hilda and Mrs. Arl care for them."

"So much the worse," said Mr. Cunningham, coldly; "their worldliness is even more insincere than it might have been. My dear Marian, do not juggle with right and wrong, or make false distinctions; to live, move, and have their

being, in order that people may think them this, that, or the other, is nothing but foolishness and vulgarity. These may sound very venial faults, but they eat all the stamina and worth out of a character, and leave its possessor blind and helpless, to fall before temptations of which they would once have exclaimed, like the Syrian of old,—'Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?'—But what a sermon I have given you! Let us make haste home, or they will think I have run away with you!"

Luncheon was in fact half over before they arrived,—and the party had been augmented by several visitors.

As they went up-stairs to dress, Miss Vivian said to Marian, in the most bland and friendly manner,—

"My dear Miss Withers, I really must take you a little under my wing. Are

you aware of the very peculiar appearance it has for you to go wandering in the park alone with any gentleman who chances to invite you to take a walk? Perhaps in the country, amongst the society to which you are accustomed, such a thing would excite no remark,—but here, it is a different matter; and appearances and proprieties cannot be trespassed upon with impunity. I make no apology for my frankness—for it is my way to be frank."

"But," said poor Marian, quite bewildered by this new light, "Mr. Cunningham is my father's friend,—and he has stayed at our house."

"Mr. Cunningham seems a very nice man,—but all men like to persuade women to commit themselves in some way, that they may boast of it afterwards."

"You would not say that if you knew

Mr. Cunningham," replied Marian, indignantly.

Miss Vivian shrugged her shoulders, and said coldly,—

"I know what men think of such things, and I know also the usages of good society better than you do; and I tell you that nothing can make it correct for a young person to leave the rest of the company to take *tête-à-tête* walks as you did this morning."

Marian's eyes filled with tears; her annoyance at the supreme impertinence of this address was lost in the fear that she really had done something very wrong, and that Mr. Cunningham would think her forward and foolish.

Miss Vivian having done what she intended,—made her feel uncomfortable, —continued in a friendly tone,—

"Now do not be foolish and spoil your eyes,—it is in such very bad taste to cry. Come into my room and my maid shall dress your hair;—you did not look well last night at all. I heard Albert wondering to Lady Wollaston what made you look so different to other people; and your dress fitted very ill and was not well made."

As Marian had worn one of the dresses she had brought from home, unregenerated by the genius of Coralie, her conscience told her this was very likely to be the case.

"Miss Vivian has been telling me that it was not proper for me to walk with Mr. Cunningham," said Marian, in great distress, to Mrs. Arl, whom she caught in her dressing-room, just before descending to dinner.

"Perhaps it was not quite the thing,"

said Mrs. Arl; "but with Mr. Cunningham it did not so much signify. I thought Mr. Glynton looked rather surprised to see you come in together; but I told him that Mr. Cunningham was your father's intimate friend, and that made it seem quite natural; you see people here are so particular about appearances."

And Mrs. Arl put the finishing touch to a most coquettish head-dress, which she wore for the special purpose of attracting the notice of the old Marquis, who was prolonging his visit to Glynton, and who was to dine at Carrisford this day.

"Who has been vexing you?" asked Mr. Cunningham, as he drew Marian's arm through his own to go to dinner; Marian hesitated for an instant and then frankly told him.

"Ah, well, never mind them; I will take care you do nothing very wrong whilst I am here."

Marian looked at him gratefully and felt her heart set at rest.

END OF VOL. II.

MARIAN WITHERS.

BY

GERALDINE E. JEWSBURY,

AUTHOR OF "ZOE," "THE HALF-SISTERS," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE HISTORY

OF

MARIAN WITHERS.

CHAPTER I.

It was certainly Saturday before Albert presented himself at Mayfield, (which was the name of the place Sir Frederick Wollaston had taken,) but it was as early as it was possible to arrive.

He had been very restless and disconsolate ever since Lady Wollaston's departure, and it was not until he and his portmanteau were fairly admitted inside

the hall, that he began to feel any misgivings as to the reception he might meet with for coming so much earlier than he was expected.

He had full leisure to indulge in many fears as he was left standing alone on the hearthrug in the drawing-room, whilst the servant went to announce him to Lady Wollaston.

She was in her own sitting-room, where she usually spent her mornings. She did not in the least expect Albert to arrive so much earlier than the other guests, but she was too well pleased to think of surprise, and she went down to him at once. Albert had by that time become extremely nervous, and began to stammer an unintelligible apology about the early coach, and the uncertainty of finding room by the other.

Lady Wollaston was glad to see him,

and felt no embarrassment in showing that she was so.

"I am very glad you secured the first chance; will you come up-stairs. I never sit in this room in the morning."

Albert followed her into a small room, plainly furnished. The carpet was of many years standing, and the curtains were of the simplest chintz, but there was over all the quiet home look, before which the glories of upholstery become vulgar. It was her own peculiar apartment, to which visitors were seldom admitted. She had arranged every thing as she best loved to have it; and there was everywhere the indescribable charm of the refined and graceful presence that dwelt therein.

She resumed her seat at the work-table she had quitted to receive Albert; her occupation was nothing more romantic

than hemming a narrow strip of muslin for a frill. Sitting there in a morning dress, her hair confined under a little lace cap, Lady Wollaston had never looked to Albert so fascinating, and at the same time, so unapproachable. She seemed to be surrounded by a pure, clear atmosphere into which he did not dare to enter. He felt as though he had intruded into some sanctuary, and afraid to move, he gazed with a timid admiring awkwardness on all that surrounded him, so unpretending and yet so graceful; the glasses of flowers arranged by her own hands, and all the small feminine details of her possessions strewn about, impressed him like holy relics.

He watched in silence her hands as they moved at her work, and inhaled the heavy sandal-wood perfume of her Indian work-box, till he was plunged in

a delicious stupefaction; at last he said, like one speaking in a dream,

"You sit here by yourself all day like an angel."

Lady Wollaston laughed outright.

"What do you see so wonderful?" she asked.

"I do not know, but all is so different to any thing I ever saw before. You make me feel the distance between us—you so pure, I so worthless. I know not how I ever dared to speak to you."

"Suppose you read to me, here is my book; go on where I left off—it is a book you ought to read for yourself."

He took the book from her hands and read a few pages without in the least knowing what they were about.

"Do you like all this?" he asked at length; "let me talk to you instead; it is not often I can listen to your voice.

I am so happy to be near you, it seems as though I needed a double self to enjoy all the happiness there is in being thus with you. I never heard you play, let me hear you now, when there is no one else by."

She smiled, and putting down her work went to the piano.

"I will play for you the piece I like best myself."

And she began one of Beethoven's sonatas, part of which she played with exquisite grace and feeling. She was not nearly so fine a performer as Mrs. Arl—in fact, she had no pretensions either to brilliancy or execution—but she played the music for its own sake as though she were talking it over to herself.

"It is now your turn to sing to me," said she, turning to him.

"I cannot. One must grow accustomed

to being in Heaven before one dare let one's voice be heard. I will sing to you another time, but not know. Do not ask me now."

"Well then, let us go into the garden, and I will show you the flower-beds I have laid out myself. I am very proud of them."

She put on a garden bonnet and they strolled out together.

"Nancy would have lined that parasol with pink, for the sake of her complexion, and tied some fantastic handkerchief upon her head," thought Albert, as he gazed at Lady Wollaston, "but she never has *her* noble look!"

In his ideas the whole inhabited world was fast becoming merged into one single "HER!"

The total absence of all coquetry or intention prepense, combined with her in-

stinctive gracefulness, gave a fascination devoid of meretriciousness to all Lady Wollaston did. Her pride and coldness were completely gone so far as Albert was concerned, and he was admitted into companionship with that fine and noble nature which lay, like the garden of Paradise, beyond that cold and haughty exterior.

The garden at Mayfield was a large, rambling, old-fashioned place, and abounded with fine trees. Some American beeches were there, in the full glory of their bronze foliage. Long walks, covered with elastic turf instead of gravel, went amongst the flower beds, which were edged with a luxuriant growth of box, which must have been the result of the growth and skill of many years.

Lady Wollaston paused at the enclosure of a small flower garden, disposed round

an old moss-grown sun-dial in the centre of the garden, beyond which lay a stately cedar walk, lying somewhat below the level of the flower garden. A flight of stone steps, with heavy balustrades, led to it.

"I planted every one of these flowers myself, and laid out the beds. I delight in gardening; it is the greatest amusement I have, and that fine alley of cedars is my favourite walk. Lilies of the valley grow about in great profusion; the air is sometimes faint with the perfume of them. I have grown very fond of this place. I shall be sorry when the time comes to leave it."

Albert started as though he had received a blow.

"Why do you bring up such thoughts?" he said. "May I not forget for a single hour that there must come an end? I

would believe this day eternal, and we two the sole inhabitants of the world."

Lady Wollaston looked surprised at the vehemence with which he spoke, but she made no reply, and they walked on in silence. She was full of quiet happiness. The one dream of her life seemed to be now realized. She had, as she thought, found a friend in whom she might rely with her whole heart.

It is a great pity that women never will learn the difference betwen a "friend" and a lover until it is too late!

They continued to walk side by side up and down the cedar walk, and though not speaking much, a sense of confidence and intimacy sprang up between them, such as months of ordinary intercourse could not have wrought. She forgot that there ever had been a time when she did not know him; and for him, he desired

nothing but to remain ever thus beside her.

It was a lovely day in autumn. The slight morning frost had given place to a warm bright sun, made more precious by the slight earthy odour from the fallen leaves, which marked that such days would be few.

They were both of them very happy. Neither of them imagined that day to be more than the threshold of a long continuance of happy intercourse.

It is always so. Whenever joy comes to men, it seems only like a portal to something better and more lasting than itself; so men do not linger to enjoy it; they press hastily forwards, impatient for the *to-morrow* it was to usher in; and they find that it was a portal leading to nothing, that they have already passed through it, and are hurried forwards on

their journey through wild wastes or "tangled wildernesses," wherever it may lie, and that they can return no more to that *yesterday* which they scarcely heeded.

"We must return to the house now," said Lady Wollaston at length, as they paused beside the dial; "I did not think it was so late."

"Oh, do not break the blessed spell yet!" cried Albert, imploringly.

"We have been out more than two hours: it is past four o'clock. The beauty of the day is past."

"It is, indeed," said Albert, as they slowly directed their steps towards the house.

"I expect Sir Frederick every moment. Will you be in the way to meet him? I must leave you now until dinner time."

She ascended the steps of the front

door, and it seemed to Albert that darkness fell across his path as she disappeared.

"Would Glynton, — would any one," mused he, "believe that I have been alone with her nearly the whole day without daring to utter one word the whole world might not have heard? Positively overawed by her presence till I did not venture to think my own thoughts! What a fool I should seem to them."

The sound of horses' feet, the barking of dogs, and the noise of wheels splashing up the gravel walk interrupted his reverie. It was Sir Frederick and his party, consisting of some half-dozen fashionable sporting men, fox-hunters, steeple-chase riders; all stars of greater or less magnitude in their own meridian.

At another time Albert would have

been proud of the introduction, but now he felt it little less than desecration to see them come to the same house where *she* dwelt.

"Well, Albert, my boy, how are you? Glad to see you; been here long? Helen wrote me word she had invited you!"

With a hearty shake of the hand, Sir Frederick presented him to his other guests, and they all entered the house together.

Lady Wollaston dressed herself that day with a dreamy sense of happiness. For the first time of years she took a pleasure in making herself look beautiful. She put on a rich, ruby-coloured velvet dress. Her hands and arms, which were extremely fine, were adorned with rings and bracelets worthy of them. The emotions of the morning had brought a faint colour to her cheeks, and given

her a look of child-like gladness. Her eyes rather than her lips seemed to smile: she received her husband's guests with the air of a queen. Albert felt that she had dressed herself for him alone, and his man's heart swelled with a pride so natural, that it could scarcely be blamed. All the men secretly wondered that Wollaston should be so little proud of such a woman for his wife.

Dinner was announced, and of course it fell to the lot of a much more distinguished man than Albert, to take her into the dining-room, but he caught her eye as she passed, and a faint odour of violets came from her dress.

Of course the dinner conversation was uninteresting enough to two persons who had been so extremely well-content with the absence of all other company.

Lady Wollaston retired almost imme-

diately after dinner, and Albert was left with the gentlemen, to hear them discuss their plans for the moors, and the various hunts and coursing-matches that were to come off, and the various politics of the stable and kennel, and at night there were cards.

Lady Wollaston did not appear again that night, nor was she visible the next morning until the gentlemen had gone into the stables, when Albert, who was watching, thought he saw the gleam of her dress in the cedar walk. He found her there; but it was not the quiet happiness of the previous day: she looked annoyed and weary.

"I always dread this sporting company," said she. "I am so glad that you do not care for field sports; they are called manly, but I think them brutal. Where they are, the men take up the

nature of their dogs and horses. What have you been doing all day?"

"Watching for you—what else would you have me do?"

"You will come again next week, when Mrs. Arl and her party will be here? I have written to ask her for Wednesday."

"What good will it do me to see you surrounded by a crowd of people, when I cannot approach you, nor speak one word to you. I could kill every man who only looks at you!"

"Hush! do not say rash things, even in jest. You must come to help me and make my task lighter. What are friends for, but to help us bear our burden?"

"Blessed one! I would sweep all sorrow from thy path, and die to obtain for thee one moment's happiness!"

He took the hand that leaned upon

his arm, and kissed it passionately. It was at once gently but firmly withdrawn.

He had no chance of ascertaining whether she were displeased, for Sir Frederick and some of his party descended from the terrace into the cedar walk, and joined them. Albert had no opportunity of speaking to her again alone; indeed, as he had to leave the next morning by the early coach, he could not even take leave of her, but had to leave his farewell compliments with Sir Frederick.

CHAPTER II.

Mr. Cunningham left Carrisford the day after his walk in the park with Marian; he promised, however, to join them at Mayfield on their visit to his cousin. Albert did not come again after Lady Wollaston's departure, and poor Marian found Carrisford quite as dull and prison-like as her own home at Burn Brook had of late seemed; added to which, at Carrisford, there was no Aunt Alice, with her silent sympathy, to love her all day long. She was fretted and weary of the continual talk that went on about lace, flounces,

blonde-falls, and wedding-bonnets. All the wedding finery was ordered from London, —and box after box arrived, till Marian sickened at the profusion, accompanied as it was, by Hilda's bitter complainings, and Mrs. Arl's eternal dissertations upon what the Arundels and the Vivians, could, would, or might say about the arrangements on the approaching occasion, and who should be invited to the breakfast; Marian felt very miserable amongst it all.

One morning she received a summons to the library, to assist in unpacking a box which had just arrived from London; as she approached she heard Mrs. Arl say to her sister, apparently in conclusion to some foregoing observation,—

"Miss Withers is a very nice girl, but I wish you were not so open with her; it is not well to trust any one out of one's own family, and there is no need she should

know all the loathing you feel to Glynton; she may turn it against you some day."

"You do not know Marian," began Hilda, impatiently,—she stopped short on seeing Marian beside her. Both sisters looked somewhat confused; but Mrs. Arl, who piqued herself upon her presence of mind, and her talents for diplomacy, put a good face upon the matter, and said,—

"I was just telling Hilda not to let Mr. Glynton see what very intimate friends you are, because men like him have such strange notions, and cannot understand women being so desperately fond of each other: it is not worth while to vex him too much."

"Glynton is quite bore enough, without my trying to invent disagreeable things for him to say," replied Hilda.

"Glynton, I know, has a fixed notion

that women never do each other any good; and if he thinks you are very intimate with Miss Withers, it will just be the reason he will make you break with her."

"I wish you would let me have these last few days in peace, and not torment me before my time," replied Hilda, almost fiercely. "See, Marian," she continued, turning to the box, "will you have your bonnet trimmed with flowers, or would you prefer these marabout feathers tipped with blue? I vote for the feathers, they look softer; Lady Mortlock had them in her bonnet the other day. Madame Raspail has sent down all these patterns of silk for the dresses; no less than four shades of white, and these blues, pinks, and dove-colours, are for you to choose from; that veil is come down for you, Glynton has sent for mine to Brussels. The only pleasure I shall take will be in seeing you look nice.

It is one comfort in being rich that one can make presents to one's friends."

But Marian was insensible to the charms of blonde and Chantilly, and far too miserable and dispirited to be comforted by any amount of finery, added to which she did not like the obligation of receiving such splendid presents.

"I think I put it out of her head to suspect that we were talking about her, even if she did overhear us," said Mrs. Arl when Marian left the room.

"What a great deal of trouble you take to invent things for other people to think," replied Hilda, sarcastically.

At length the day arrived for their visit to Lady Wollaston. Mr. Arl and the three ladies went together, for Albert did not make his appearance. They arrived some time before dinner. Lady Wollaston was in the drawing-room and received

them very cordially, but she looked round as though expecting to have seen some one else. They took a stroll in the garden, and whilst there were joined by Mr. Cunningham, who had just arrived. He looked gloomy, almost embarrassed, and Marian fancied he was vexed.

At length the dressing-bell summoned them to the house, and they separated without Lady Wollaston having dared to inquire what had become of Albert.

When they re-assembled in the drawing-room, Albert was there. He addressed Lady Wollaston with formal politeness, and she received him with somewhat of her former haughty indifference; both felt there was something between them that had not existed when they last met. She turned away from him almost immediately to receive her other guests, and took no further notice of him, — nevertheless, a

close observer might have seen that she had ceased to watch the door.

It was a very large party; all the chief persons in the neighbourhood were there, in addition to the visitors stopping in the house. The inevitable Glynton came of course, and took possession of Hilda. Marian was taken down to dinner by Mr. Cunningham. Albert devoted himself to a beautiful girl with long blonde ringlets, and paid her the most devoted attention during the whole of dinner. Mrs. Arl, seated between Lord Mortlock and her admiring old Marquis, was in a state of extreme contentment, especially as she satisfied herself that the display of plate did not equal her own at Carrisford. The evening passed as heavily as the evenings of state dinner parties usually do. The ladies retired to the drawing-room to look at picture-books, and criticise each other;

Lady Wollaston sitting in the profoundest indifference as to whether her visitors were amused or nor.

When the gentlemen entered there was a slight revival. Albert sat down beside Marian at a distant table, but he took no notice of her; he seemed engrossed by some coloured plates of the Alhambra. One or two of the ladies were prevailed upon to sing, but no one listened. At length the carriages were announced, and the guests departed. Those who were remaining all night stood in a group near the fire. Lady Wollaston was engaged at the other end of the room in restoring some choice prints to their portfolios, when, by some accident, it slipped from the stand, and the prints were scattered upon the floor. Albert, who was near, and still pretending to be occupied with the Alhambra, came for-

wards to assist her. As he stooped down he raised his eyes to her face, and although her head was almost instantly averted, the inexplicable shadow that had been between them dispersed like a cloud absorbed before the sun; Albert felt that he was a step nearer to her. Lady Wollaston had done nothing incompatible with the very strictest and most scrupulous propriety, but she left Albert to replace the prints at his leisure, and turned away from the table with her heart beating violently, and a dim, confused sense of having done something wrong. Perhaps it was her own heart she was beginning to suspect.

Albert had no excuse for loitering the next morning. Mr. Arl did not approve his neglect of business, and he saw himself constrained to depart for Manchester, instead of going out for a few days'

shooting as he had anticipated. Moreover, he received no invitation to return. Lady Wollaston had quite intended to ask him to dinner again before Mrs. Arl left, but when it came to the point, she wanted confidence to do so, and thought it would come better from her husband; but Sir Frederick was just then so much engrossed in examining a patent gun-lock, which had come by the carrier a few minutes previously, that he allowed Albert to depart without thinking of enquiring when he was coming again. The omission was none the less provoking for being accidental,—and Albert departed in a state of bitter annoyance, denouncing in his heart Lady Wollaston, for a coquette who trifled with his feelings, and meditating the whole way upon how he should assert himself against her.

Perhaps Lady Wollaston was vexed at

her own want of decision when she saw the result, but she had been too long trained to control the expression of her feelings to let the disappointment appear to any one who had not closely observed her; and in this world people are luckily too much engrossed by themselves and their own affairs to scrutinise their neighbours, unless there are motives of love, or malice, or curiosity, to arouse their insight. She saw Marian in the garden, and recollecting Mr. Cunningham's recommendation, she thought it a good opportunity to make acquaintance with her. There is a certain phase of disappointment when one finds a soothing excitement in doing a good-natured thing, and Lady Wollaston joined Marian, glad to feel she had been requested to notice her.

"The sensitive plant could show small fruit
Of the love which it felt from the leaf to the root,"

and Marian could show nothing of the deep, secret sympathy she felt with Lady Wollaston. Still, where a feeling exists, it is apt to give a certain impression and emphasis even to the most indifferent words and actions, and though Marian did not say a single thing that was not on the level and ordinary run of conversation, yet there was a shy, gentle, admiring interest apparent, which pleased Lady Wollaston.

After a while Mr. Cunningham joined them.

"I have been looking for you," said he, addressing Lady Wollaston, "to say good-bye; and if Miss Withers has any letter or message to her father, I shall be happy to take it, as I shall probably see him to-morrow?"

"Shall you indeed!" cried Marian: "I wish I were going with you, but I have promised Hilda not to leave her until

after the marriage. Tell him I am counting the days till I can come home; I never felt such a wish for home before."

"You will have time to write a letter if you wish to do so, and that will be more satisfactory than the best message, and you may make it double without fear of the postage before your eyes."

Marian departed, leaving Mr. Cunningham and Lady Wollaston together.

"Do you know, there is something about Miss Withers I like extremely, and I compliment you upon your discernment. She is young, and her character is unformed as yet, but I feel a sympathy with her, and I should like to have her to stay with me for some time."

"I wished her to know you. I think there is a certain resemblance between your characters, as much as can exist between a young girl and a formed woman."

"Well then, if you know her father, cannot you ask him to let her come to me for a visit. I am sure it would be better for her than going to Carrisford so much. Mrs. Arl is not a good companion for any girl;—she has sacrificed poor Hilda's happiness for life; that girl has been quite persuaded into that match. She is sure to be made miserable."

"Poor Hilda, as you call her, is worse than miserable; she is doing wickedly, and her sin will find her out. She is helping to degrade her own sex; for she shows that she has no belief in her own value,—no perception of that purity which ought to be the instinct of her soul. She will indeed go through a legal form, and so secure herself from the censure of society; but wherein does she differ (except that she makes a better bargain) from the wretched women who, from their necessities, sell

themselves for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread? Women have no stability in themselves. They talk about purity, they talk about delicacy and female virtue; but what faith do they show in all these fine things? How are men likely to consider these virtues as realities, and what reverence can they feel for women, who, having been kept from the evil of the world, show so little faith in the reality of female worth, that they are willing to sell themselves into decent bondage to any man, however profligate, who can give them a home, or gratify their vanity by a fine establishment?"

"Oh, you are wise, and bitter and contemptuous!" cried Lady Wollaston: "you men *are* cruel, every one of you. You crush us down with a morality which you yourselves will not lighten with one of your fingers! Now, listen to me.—If women

knew what they were doing when they, as you say, 'sell themselves into bondage' to a man they do not care about, for the sake of a position in life,—they would not do it. They commit an irrevocable deed before they know all it involves. They are taught that no well-regulated young woman ought to think about love—that it is an idle fancy, if not a grave impropriety; and they are taught the necessity of making a good match—it is about the only thing they hear treated as a reality. Those who have any good, right, womanly feeling in their nature, wake, when it is too late, to the knowledge of what they have bartered away. Believe me, that no man, with the freedom and outgoing activity which is his birthright, can know or imagine what is endured by a woman shut up within herself, with no outlet for her feelings,—nobody to whom she may, or indeed ought, to utter

the thoughts that are perplexing her. Talk of despair! None but a woman who has married rashly knows the force of the word! Love cannot be compelled by any amount of vows; and to be condemned for life to a man she does not love—to feel the grinding and grating of the thousand trifles that such a close connexion entails—to know that if he goes out in the morning he must return at noon or at night; to feel the shortest absence as a blessing—a respite from the intolerable burden of his presence; and to know that for all life it must be thus. To feel all that she might have been; to feel powers and faculties awakening within her, which might have made her life so rich in blessedness; and to have all thrown back to die within her heart; that is despair, if you like. Do not speak so cruelly—if women sin, be very sure that they expiate bitterly!"

Lady Wollaston's eyes flashed, and the tears rather darted from them than flowed. She, ordinarily so calm, now seemed tossed and swayed as by an inward tempest. She scarcely knew what she said; but the protest against her whole life was uttered by an impulse that she could not control. The passion had gathered from too deep a source to be soon allayed. She leaned her head upon the old sun-dial, and her large tears fell thick and heavily upon the ground. Mr. Cunningham, troubled and perplexed beyond measure, at this sudden vehemence, did not attempt to check its course; but stood over her with the tenderest pity. After a few moments she raised her head, and drying away her tears, said more calmly,—

"Why do you make me hate you? I thought when you came back, I should find a friend in you as well as a relation. You

have never been tried. You keep on the outside of things, and make wise observations, like a Greek chorus; but whom have you ever helped by them?"

It was now Mr. Cunningham's turn to be troubled. He did not shed tears as she had done, but his face became like death; his lips quivered,—at length he said, like one faint with torture,

"Helen, spare me! If I have kept away from you, and seemed indifferent, forgive me—we are poor, weak creatures. When I came home from Germany, I had not seen you since I was a youth. I found you just married. You are the first and only woman I ever loved. I could not stay beside you—I went away; I did not believe you had chosen your husband for love. You say I have never been tried. I pray to God you may never suffer as I have done. If you have needed a friend

and found none, pardon me for the sake of the misery I have endured. I am come back now with an attachment you may accept honestly. Trust me; whenever you need help or counsel, that I can give, send for me, and I will come. I never thought to have told you this; but believe, that you may trust me—I would never have looked upon your face again, if I could not have done so honestly."

There was a long pause, during which both returned towards the house.

"If I had only known, only suspected that one person in the world cared what became of me, it would have lightened my life, and given me a motive for exertion," said Lady Wollaston, at length. "Now that you feel a friendship for me, it will be some encouragement to be worthy of it. I was very miserable when I spoke so bitterly to you just now."

"It is enough," replied he; "we understand each other. When you need me, I will come at your lightest word; be sure you may trust me; and that I will never judge you."

"But why need you go away so soon? Why can you not remain here, at least a little while longer?"

"I must go; do not ask me to stay. Only promise, that if ever you need a friend, you will send for me."

"I will promise thankfully enough; but do you suppose that I am likely to be more unhappy than hitherto?"

"I hope not, I hope not; but whatever sorrow comes, do not seek to avert it by unworthy means. Some day the suffering which has seemed so bitter will become a sacred experience, which you will rejoice to have known."

"That is a man's speech again; 'ex-

perience,' always swamps the life of a woman. It is only men who can afford to make it, or who have the chance of profiting by it when made. Perhaps, in the next world we may be allowed to profit from the miseries we have suffered here."

"And you, my cousin, speak like a woman: we men, offer you our life as the laboured result of experience; you reject it, for the sake of trying miserable little experiments of your own!"

Mr. Cunningham hastened his departure; he did not wish his cousin to perceive how much the interview had shaken his firmness. If what had just passed had only occurred three months sooner, it might have changed Lady Wollaston's life,—but it came too late; her fancy, her sentiments were now occupied by Albert. She was very glad that her wise cousin

thought so highly of her; but her first instinct was to think that Albert would be proud of it for her. As to all that Mr. Cunningham had said about his sufferings in struggling against his passion for her, it was as though she had read them in a book. Her thoughts were all engrossed in wishing to see Albert again.

Mrs. Arl's visit drew to a close. The sportsmen, and Sir Frederick amongst them, were to start for the moors the next day. Lady Wollaston accepted Mrs. Arl's invitation to be present at the wedding breakfast, and spend some days at Carrisford.

CHAPTER III.

THE wedding-day drew nearer and nearer, like the day of execution to a criminal. Presents in every variety of elegant and costly uselessness had poured in upon the bride elect.

Her *trousseau* was complete, and had been the envy and admiration of all her female acquaintance; but even that stimulus failed to raise any feelings of interest in Hilda's breast. She would look at nothing, nor give directions about any thing; shut up in her own room as much as possible, she ceased to converse

even with Marian;—she was like a person carrying a full cup, fearful lest the least accident should spill the contents.

Mrs. Arl was too much engrossed by the cares and anxieties of arranging a brilliant wedding breakfast, to have much time or attention to bestow upon her sister. She satisfied herself that the kindest thing she could do was to leave Hilda to herself, and she recommended Marian to do the same.

It had been settled that the bridesmaids should arrive the previous day; there were to be three besides Marian—pretty good-tempered girls, almost wild with spirits, and enjoying the idea of assisting Mrs. Arl in her preparations, "and making themselves!" They galloped up and down the house like young kittens, and went into raptures over their bridesmaid's costume.

Two were to be attired in rose-coloured silk, and the other two in blue; the bride alone being in white. Hilda's wedding-dress, with the magnificent veil that accompanied it, might have satisfied a duchess; but she turned from it with a sick shuddering, and desired that it might be put out of sight until wanted.

The bridal morning at length arose clear and bright—the ideal of a wedding-day.

Marian early attempted to gain an entrance to Hilda, but she was met at the door by her maid, who said, "that Miss Hilda had a bad headach and would keep quiet until the company arrived." Marian was turning sadly away when she was met by Mrs. Arl, who said,—

"I have seen Hilda. She is rather nervous, poor thing, as is only natural. She will be better alone. You are quite

dressed, I see, and very well you look. I know somebody who will admire you," continued she, with a meaning smile, that made Marian's heart beat, foolishly enough, for she hoped Mrs. Arl meant Albert.

"But come," continued Mrs. Arl, "I want you to see the breakfast-table—it looks beautiful; and I want you to help to put round the flowers for each guest. It is Mr. Arl's fancy, or else I am not sure that it is quite the correct thing; but flowers always look well."

Mrs. Arl rattled on, not from absolute want of feeling, but because her heart was in the wedding breakfast, and she did not realize that Hilda could really feel any repugnance to such an excellent match that would not very soon pass over.

The guests began to arrive in quick succession. Lady Mortlock, in her new carriage and four splendid horses; the

Arundels, the Vivians, and one or two neighbouring families whose presence Mrs. Arl had much coveted. Glynton and three of his friends arrived at precisely the proper moment. He looked very nervous, poor man, which was not wonderful. Matrimony had always been the beacon to which he had looked as marking the close of his career.

Hilda descended to the drawing-room, looking deadly pale, but perfectly calm. Her resolution never once gave way; not even when, seated at breakfast, one of the guests arose, and, with the customary flourishes, proposed the health of "Mr. and Mrs. Glynton," wishing them "a long life and much happiness."

Whilst she was changing her dress, preparatory to setting off on their journey, she said to Marian, who was assisting her in silence,—

"Do not cry for me, Marian. I am like a stone now, and do not feel to care for anything in the world. I cannot be worse off than I am."

She kissed her sister, and took leave of her friends without a single tear,—but Marian saw that both her gloves were torn by the violence with which her hands were clenched.

A splendid travelling-carriage and four, with the valet and lady's-maid in the rumble, carried off the "happy couple" on their road to Dover, whence they were to start for Paris.

The remaining guests departed soon afterwards, all declaring that everything had gone off splendidly, and warmly congratulating Mrs. Arl on such a desirable settlement for her sister.

The rest of the day passed miserably enough for Marian. She took off the

rich watered silk dress which had been given to her in her quality of bridesmaid, and put it away, thinking she could never care for fine dresses again.

It was, however, destined to be a day memorable to more than Hilda.

If Lady Wollaston had been conscious of the perilous position in which she stood, she possessed sufficient firmness, and sufficient common sense to have fled from the danger whilst there was yet time. But it is the misfortune in matters of sentiment, that people are bewitched and bewildered by metaphysical questions on the plainest rules of right and wrong; all the while fancying themselves endowed with supernatural clearness of insight into the very heart and root of all morality. It is a curious fact that both men and women should utter the most beautiful sentiments of religion and morality, whilst

they are practically breaking the laws of both. This must either be the natural deceitfulness of the human heart; or else, the effect of the "tree of knowledge" is now, as it was in the beginning, *in secula seculorum*, to make mankind think themselves "as gods" when they are on the point of a signal "fall."

Lady Wollaston escaped from the noise and bustle of the wedding breakfast into the garden. Neither she nor Albert had as yet interchanged a single word, but he had made her feel and see by his manner that he was supremely displeased. She was meditating upon this painful state of things, when Albert met her at the turning of a walk. Both had thought it possible they might meet each other; both had desired to do so; but as it had not been actually premeditated, they both started and looked confused. Albert at

first seemed disposed to pass on with a haughty bow, and a somewhat corsair-like look of desperation, but Lady Wollaston said gently,—

"Tell me what I have done to vex you, and why you have looked so savage all the morning?"

An ill-humour is too great a luxury to be abandoned all at once. It is moreover a post of great advantage, whenever any one endeavours to coax us out of it. It is like holding a fort; we endeavour to make good terms before leaving it.

Albert, therefore, replied coldly,—

"I looked unhappy because I felt unhappy. I had not the vanity to suppose it could excite the notice of Lady Wollaston."

"My dear Albert, do not be so childish, but tell me directly what is the

matter with you. I have not so many friends, that the few I possess should torment me."

"I do not torment you; I cannot torment you if I would," replied Albert, savagely, switching with his cane at a superb butterfly that had settled on a rose. The rose and the butterfly were both destroyed by the blow.

"Something must surely be very wrong with you," said Lady Wollaston gravely; "will you not tell me what it is?"

"Oh! do not be angry with me," said Albert impetuously; "I cannot bear it—you do not know how miserable I have been since I saw you last. You do not know what I suffer in seeing you entrenched in your rank. That day at your house, I could not approach you; I thought you wished to punish me for having once forgotten the gulf there is

between us, and you know not how your indifferent and haughty manner rankled and ulcerated in my heart. You allowed me to depart without one word of kindness; utterly indifferent when I might see you again,—although you know that your presence is the very life of my life. I was sent away like the most indifferent stranger. I hope you will never know the bitterness which oppressed me as I left your gate;—I have been in torment ever since, and you smile, and ask me if I am vexed!"

He recommenced his work of destruction amongst the flowers as he ceased to speak.

"Oh! how little you know! how little you know how things really were," said Lady Wollaston. "At large dinner-parties there is always a certain etiquette which must be observed; I was as much

subject to it as you were yourself; there was no choice possible for me as the mistress of the house. But in the drawing-room, when you might have been near me, you sullenly held aloof. You say I allowed you to depart like a stranger, but I thought it would be as well, that you should receive your next invitation from my husband; that you departed without one was an accident. He reproached me afterwards for what he termed my "haughty negligence." I thought that you, at least, would not have been carried away by a caprice, and would judge me better; but I see that with you, my professed friend, I must as carefully weigh my words and actions as if you were an enemy; indeed, no enemy of common sense, would judge so unworthily of me as you have done."

"Oh yes, women are always in the right," said Albert sarcastically; "they call us unjust and capricious when they wish to defend themselves; they can always take shelter under some of their charming feminine ambiguities about friendship, which bind them to nothing. You call me sullen and unjust; but how should you understand the torment and madness with which you have filled my heart? It is you who are unjust; but all women are alike, they never forget themselves for a moment; they are either scheming how to make one their slave, or else calculating how to escape from their promises. Women can talk imperiously of their feelings, but they are all egoists when it comes to the proof."

"Albert, what can you mean?—what demon has taken possession of you?"

"I mean that I am mad,—I mean that

I am desperate,—I mean that I LOVE you, and you give me cold, icy good-will, and speak of friendship, when it is my very life that is exhaled towards you; and now that I have told you this, I know I have banished myself from you for ever,—but at least your curiosity is gratified, and you know the 'demon' that possesses me!"

"Loving and hating seem much alike by your account," said Lady Wollaston coldly; "I think we had better return to the house."

She turned down another walk which led home by a near road. Albert followed her submissively enough, for he feared that he had offended past forgiveness. Mr. Arl was seen coming towards them,—would she speak to him? A moment more, and it would be too late. He looked at her imploringly.

"Do not leave me in displeasure; speak to me one word—be merciful to me!"

If Lady Wollaston had only persisted in her silence, all the wisdom of Solomon would not have stood her in such good stead; but she did reply quietly enough, and coldly enough.

"When you come to your right mind I may speak to you; not until then."

She was not prepared to break with Albert; she hoped to bring him to reason; she did not intend to entangle herself; she thought that it was impossible she could fail in her duty; his present submissiveness she regarded as a proof of her supremacy, and in this conviction she answered him. She could not well have spoken better, but the wisest speech was at that instant a great mistake. Albert felt an emotion of surprise at the reprieve thus granted to him, it let him

into the secret of his own power. Mr. Arl came up as she spoke, and Albert accepted it as his dismissal for the moment.

Right and wrong, whilst they are in the process of being completed in daily life, bear very little resemblance to the facts, as they appear when they are completed. Men are deceived by the distraction of concurrent circumstances; the excitement of life and action blinds them to the nature of the result. If it were not that nature makes this apology for men,—hiding them from themselves, so that "they know not what they do,"—the world would be too hateful.

Stupidity, selfishness, and ignorance, are bad enough; but let any one figure to himself what it would be if all the folly, and wickedness, were transacted deliberately, and with malice aforethought! It is only

in novels that villains are wound up like clocks to run a predestined course of scoundrelism,—

"And never tire or stop to rest"

until they run down!

Albert had not realised the serious game he was playing,—he was carried away by the excitement of his own feelings. The pride, and coldness, and beauty of Lady Wollaston, and the refinement of her manners, had thrown a *prestige* around her;—whilst her noble nature, and her superiority to all the women he had ever known, had powerfully excited his imagination. He was under her spell; and he was mad to produce a corresponding influence upon her. The indomitable instinct of pursuit had been roused within him,—prompting him madly and blindly to run her down, without realising where it was

to end. Whilst in her presence, the good instincts and better feelings of his nature (for which he was more indebted to the fact of being still a young man than to any abiding principle of good) were called into action, and he sincerely loved her, and desired to be worthy of her. For the time being, he felt a disgust to the coarse scenes of profligacy; and disposed to abjure all the loose and libertine philosophy which he had fancied to be profound knowledge of the world. To be near her,—to have the right of approaching her, had become every day a more imperious necessity,—though he never contemplated any personal embarrassment as the penalty. He had been hurried into his declaration by the impulse of the moment; and was terribly startled at his own rashness a moment afterwards.

After leaving her presence he wandered about the park in a state of delirious

excitement, hardly knowing what he desired or what he feared. His gratification, at the discovery of his own power, was immense; and the fervour of his admiration for her amounted almost to madness,—and yet his feeling was not sufficiently single, or intense, to blind him to all the inconvenience and risk to which he was exposed. He did not feel strong enough to take her future lot upon himself, —he felt no desire to do so; even now that he trembled upon the very verge of success, he was conscious of a cowardly desire to be well out of the affair.

Poor Lady Wollaston lent an absent ear to Mr. Arl's discourse after Albert had left them. She sat down to chess with him like one in a waking sleep. She had heard two words that afternoon, which had shaken her being to its centre; and her memory repeated incessantly, "I mean

that I am mad,—I mean that I love you!" and her heart beat with a delicious fear as she recollected the look and tone that accompanied them.

Becoming every instant more incapable of giving attention to what was passing around her, she allowed Mr. Arl to bring the game to a conclusion by a speedy victory; and then retired to the embrasure of the window, to indulge in the reverie that stole over her—feeling that she ought to shake it off, but still held by it as by a dream.

She was startled by seeing Albert stand before her; he seemed for a moment irresolute, but at length said, desperately,—

"I am in my right mind now, madam; and I am come to entreat you to forget my madness,—I shall go away, and offend you no more!"

Lady Wollaston started with pain it

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seemed to her that he was withdrawing the avowal of his attachment.

"You will do well," she replied; but the tone was harsh and brief, very different from her usual voice.

"You then mean me to go,—to go away and see your face no more! Do you know to what you are condemning me? Is my life — is my happiness — is all my future, then, of no consequence in your eyes, that you can so calmly bid me go away?" cried Albert, in a troubled and passionate voice. "And you have called me your friend!—if I had adopted a dog, I could not send it away thus."

"I did not bid you go; it was yourself who came this instant to throw up the compact of our friendship,—which, indeed, you have ill observed."

"Oh, do not, do not say that," cried Albert, impetuously,—"I LOVE you; and

your friendship drives me mad with its mockery. I will not pretend to what I do not feel,—I LOVE you! I ask you for nothing in return, only tell me that I have not made you hate me."

"Oh, hush! hush!" said Lady Wollaston, looking round with alarm; "I must not, I cannot listen to all this! It is as wrong for me to listen as for you to speak. Go, go!"

"I will go. But tell me that I have not made myself hateful to you?"

"Hate you! no. It does not follow that I hate you, because I do not choose you to utter what is wrong. But come, do not let us quarrel either about loving or hating; let us be good friends as we were before, and do not make me miserable again by these fits of passion and ill-humour. I have enough to torment me without your adding to it."

She offered him her hand as she spoke with a smile, in which there was as much coquetry as kindness. He was about to reply,—but the entrance of the servants with the lamp and the preparations for tea, followed by Mrs. Arl, and the awakening of her husband, necessarily put an end to the scene at an opportune moment.

Lady Wollaston was in the most charming spirits for the remainder of the evening, and made herself so agreeable that Mr. Arl forgot his newspaper and did not relapse into his slumber. Albert, by no means driven to despair, and soothed from his discomposure, was more fascinated than ever; whilst Mrs. Arl and Marian, too wearied to contribute to the conversation, were insensibly amused, and the evening passed over with a pleasantness and rapidity that does not often enliven

the exhaustion and flatness which naturally succeed to the bustle and over-strained festivity of an entertainment like that of the morning.

CHAPTER IV

MARIAN had no longer any object in remaining at Carrisford; still she lacked the energy to contemplate her departure. Her indecision was ended for her by a letter from her father, which arrived the morning after the wedding, telling her that Aunt Alice was very ill, and begging her to come home at once, even if she had to give up her post of bridesmaid. The old lady had been ailing ever since Marian left, but would not spoil her pleasure by complaining.

"I am very glad this letter did not

come yesterday," said Mrs. Arl, "it would have been too provoking. I am sorry you have to leave us, but there seems a fatality about weddings; one is sure to hear of either sickness or death immediately after. Are you really determined to go to-day?"

"Indeed, I must," said Marian, rising from table; "the coach does not leave Knutsford until three, and I know my father will meet it."

Mr. Arl and Albert both said many civil things about her sudden departure.

"You must come and pay me a visit some time, Miss Withers," said Lady Wollaston; "do you think your father will trust you with me, if I make my cousin, Mr. Cunningham, my ambassador?"

Marian made a reply as gratefully as she could. The carriage came to the door at the appointed time, and Albert handed

Mrs. Arl and Marian into it with scarcely concealed satisfaction: he was impatient for them to depart, that he might have a walk with Lady Wollaston in the garden, unrestrained by any one to observe them.

"Well, Marian," said Mrs. Arl, as they drove along, "I shall be dreadfully dull when you are gone. There will be a great stagnation after all these gaieties. Lady Wollaston leaves to-morrow. I shall see nothing of Albert when you and she are both gone; and I quite dread the void I shall find without Hilda. Weddings are nearly as melancholy as funerals. You must write to me very often, and be sure you send me special accounts of Aunt Alice. Do you think that coming here when we are quiet and free from company would do her good? I should be sure of getting you then. She should have a room to herself, and do exactly as

she pleased. Give my love to her, and tell her I shall hope to see her."

"You are very good and very kind," said Marian, warmly; "but Aunt Alice would be quite out of place here. She is a very sensible person, and I love her dearly, but she is different to the people who come here. I will give her your message, but I know she would never think of coming."

"Well, do you know, I think that Aunt Alice and I should get on charmingly together: she seems to be so simple and genuine. I am sure you take after her, and that is the reason I like you. The fact is, I am quite tired of fine people; I have taken a disgust to all these parties. By the way, Marian, I am quite sure that Mr. Cunningham is beginning to care for you."

"He has never said one word to

make me think so," interrupted Marian. "He is very kind to me, but it is all on my father's account."

"I don't go by words," said Mrs. Arl. "I am like a savage, and have an instinct for looks. Albert would be enough to cure any one from putting faith in words. I watched Mr. Cunningham's looks, when you were not thinking of him, but were absorbed in watching Albert and Lady Wollaston, and I saw an expression in his countenance that could not deceive me. Remember I am an artist, and have studied expression, and I tell you that Mr. Cunningham is beginning to feel a real interest in you. Now it is a credit to have such a man as that caring for you, far beyond all the foolish attentions of dashing, flashy young men, like Carl or those officers. So do not give him a disgust by any nonsense."

"I do not care about young men," said poor Marian, blushing; "and I am sure you are mistaken about Mr. Cunningham; he is too old and too grave, and of too much importance."

"Dear Marian, do not be missish. It would be a great thing for you to marry Mr. Cunningham; and if you had seen the pitiful look he had when you were looking miserable about Lady Wollaston, you would never waste yourself or your fresh feelings upon Albert. I have wished for an opportunity of talking to you about him; I see the effect he has had upon you, and I like you all the better for the dignity and delicacy you have shown, mixed with such real feeling—but do not waste yourself upon him. He will never marry, except for a large fortune or for connection. All young men are alike in these days, and never dream of marrying

unless they can 'better themselves,' as servants say when they change their places. And what inducement can all the little insignificant girls who lay themselves out to catch husbands offer to a man to make him marry? It is pitiable to see how girls deceive themselves,—as if one man in a hundred could afford to marry for love!"

"But," said Marian, "I am sure I never have laid myself out to make any man marry me; I should think it very wrong and very indelicate."

"I do not say that you have done so, for you have shown no disposition of that sort; but I wish you to see how you stand. It is the misfortune of girls to be brought up in worn-out traditions of society which have ceased to have any existence, so that they know neither themselves nor their relative position, and waste their

lives in the idle expectation of 'somebody coming to marry them, somebody coming to woo;' whereas, in point of fact, marriage is precisely what the young men of every succeeding generation are delaying later and later, unless it can be shown to be very well worth their while. Therefore, if a good chance of marrying does fall in a girl's way, it is the duty of her friends to see that she does not neglect it."

"I am very happy at home," said Marian, "and I do not care about being married."

"That is all very well to say; but a single woman has no standing in society, and it is a great advantage to be well married; so do not allow any silly fancy for another to prevent you making a good match when it offers. Every woman is bound to make the best bargain she can."

This discourse,—every word of which

revolted Marian's womanly instincts, but nevertheless perplexed her by its hard, dogmatic worldly common-sense, — was brought to a conclusion by the arrival of the stage-coach; and Marian's luggage was transferred to the roof.

"Well, good-bye," said Mrs. Arl, embracing her affectionately; "mind you write and tell me how you get home, and write very often, for letters will be quite a treat to me now. I have not the least idea what I shall do, now that I am all alone. I shall be very dull, that is certain; but you must come back again very soon."

The horses were by this time changed, and the coachman had taken his place on the box; Marian also exchanged her place in Mrs. Arl's carriage for her seat in the coach. There was a cracking of the whip, a trampling of horses' feet, and Marian

was speedily out of sight. Marian did not depart in the desperate fit of sorrow which had marked her last journey home. She had been deeply wounded, and now she felt glad to go home, like a bird to its nest. Her father was waiting for her as before.

"I am very glad thou art come back,—thy aunt has been fair wearying to see thee; she is sadly pulled down, poor soul. Mrs. Wilcox has been very kind, and so has the vicar's lady; but nobody can do for her to her mind except thee."

Aunt Alice was feebly seated in her easy chair, and Marian was quite shocked to see the change that three weeks had made in her appearance.

"Why, dear aunt, what is the matter with you?" she exclaimed, on seeing her.

"I don't know, child; maybe this warm

weather is too strong for me. I am glad thou art come back; I have missed thee sorely."

Marian's heart smote her. "I deserve all I have met with," thought she,—"what business had I to leave her? I am rightly served in having met with nothing but disappointment."

Aunt Alice had no specific disorder, but she suffered from great debility and nervousness. Marian strove hard to be a kind and affectionate nurse; and under the first impulse of regret for her absence, she

in the society she would have wished for, and which assumed an actual value from being the only channel through which she could ever hope to approach Albert.

"If I were well born," thought Marian, "and possessed a fortune, or even good connections, it would have been worth any one's while to marry me. I might have had Albert; but now, unless I take up with some one like young Sykes or John Wild, about whom Mrs. Wilcox is always plaguing me, I have no chance of marrying any one; and Aunt Alice says I have no right to expect anything better. I wish I were dead. Why was I sent into the world to be so miserable?"

She was morbid and unhappy, and not altogether to blame; for the emotions and passionate feelings which had been awakened within her were thrown back upon her, and the capacity for loving which had been developed, would not subside into

calmness for the mere reason of there not being the wherewithal to satisfy it.

She became cross and listless; impatient with her poor old aunt; querulously, and almost rudely, flinging to her the attentions which need to be quietly and caressingly bestowed on invalids. She reproached herself dreadfully for her own unkindness; but she seemed to have lost all control over herself, and the next hour saw her commit the same faults.

Aunt Alice, invalid as she was, entered better into Marian's feelings than many people with more pretensions to knowledge of human nature. She had an instinctive idea of the source of this change in her darling. She saw, too, how unhappy she was, and she struggled with her illness that she might not aggravate, by querulousness or feverishness, the ferment and uneasiness of Marian's mind.

To a bystander, Marian might have

seemed quite indifferent and insensible to this forbearance, but it penetrated her heart; and though she could not shake off the inequality of her temper, yet she cried herself to sleep night after night, partly with regret, and partly from the unhappiness that was preying upon her mind.

This awakening of emotion is a most critical period in the history of all girls; the fermentation of thoughts and feelings induces a fertility and activity similar to the first influences of spring upon the woods and fields. If those who have the care of girls know how to take advantage of all this blind ferment, it may be turned into an intellectual channel, and the result be the enriching and perfecting of the whole character.

Unfortunately, those who have the bringing up of girls, generally ignore this outburst of romantic fertility, and either

strive to repress it, or allow it to run to waste in profitless gossip between them and their companions; and this precious and genial season is desecrated by vulgar jesting about sweethearts, "getting married," dancing with nice young men, and all the trash that girls talk amongst themselves, until the opportunity is lost, and their ideas and whole character take a cast of frivolity which unhappily stamps the majority of the young women of England, who, having left school, are waiting to be married, and in the meantime exhibit an insatiable appetite for every amusement and excitement they can obtain.

One day, when she returned moody and discontented from a long walk (walking was the only thing she ever did of her own accord), she found the doctor sitting with her aunt. He was a tall, stoutish man, with light hair, a florid, weather-beaten

face, and a loud, jovial voice. Marian particularly detested him, though, if asked why, she could have given no reason. But many a good man has been hated with as little reason. Marian generally contrived to be absent when Mr. Redfern was expected. She had, in addition to all the other displeasing items, a peculiar spite against him from having more than once been "joked about the young doctor" by Mrs. Wilcox. She gave him a haughty bow, like one she had once seen Mrs. Arl bestow on a man she disliked, and was about to leave the room, when Mr. Redfern called after her in a familiar tone—"Come, Miss Marian, you and I must have some talk together. Your aunt has been telling me that you are ill; that you don't eat, and that you don't sleep. It is all nonsense at your age to go on in that way. The best thing for both of you would be to go from home

to some cheerful watering-place; the sea air would bring your aunt round in no time, and the gaiety would put a little spirit into you. What ails you, I say? Your pulse is all right—no cough. I shall begin to think you are in love—a disease of the heart, ha! ha! Well, going to the sea-side will cure you. There is a lady I attend, six miles from here, and she has just come from Blackpool; and she says it is very full, and it is just the air for you both; and there will be old, sober people for your aunt, and plenty of young people for you, Miss Marian. I shall see Mr. Withers this morning, and settle it all with him; so now, good-bye to you both, I have a dozen patients yet to see. By the way, Nancy Turner's boy, who was hurt in the mill, is doing well, and will be at work again in a day or two."

He shook hands with both Aunt Alice and Marian; and giving his knowing little

horse a touch with the whip, he drove off, calling out, "I shall see Withers, tell him, as I come back."

"Mr. Redfern talks very loud," said Aunt Alice; "and I don't see how your father can spare us both together; and it is a long journey to Blackpool, and I am never good at making my way among strangers."

"I wish, aunt, you would not talk to that odious man about me," said Marian; "what right has he to feel my pulse and make his impertinent remarks?—such an insufferable creature! I would not have come home if I had thought he would be here; but I knew you would not take your medicine unless I gave it to you—you never recollect to ask for it." Marian impatiently measured out the mixture, which Aunt Alice meekly swallowed, and thanked Marian for her thoughtfulness.

Mr. Redfern was a coarse, clever man,

and though he had so deeply displeased Marian, he nevertheless had given good advice, and spoken as sensibly as if he had been Mr. Cunningham himself. When John Withers came home at night, he had made up his mind that Aunt Alice and Marian were to be ready to go with him the following Monday to Preston, when he should see them into the coach for Blackpool. There was a discussion whether they should go to a boarding-house or to private lodgings. Aunt Alice was timid about meeting strangers, but then she was too

CHAPTER V.

LEAVING home was a great event to Aunt Alice, and she imagined that it was quite impossible to be ready by Monday—indeed the suddenness of the whole arrangement took away her breath. But John Withers showed a tact and gentleness for which few would have given him credit. He soothed her nervousness, declaring that it would do him all the good in the world to get over to see them, and have a breath of sea air; told her how necessary Mr. Redfern had said it was for Marian, till the dear old lady began to regard it in

the light of a duty, and to be resigned to it accordingly. In spite of herself, Marian was glad of the prospect of change.

When they arrived at Simpson's Hotel, the waiter, a good-humoured, gossiping fellow, who seemed to regard all the visitors of the house with the most paternal benevolence, as if they were his peculiar charge, told them in a confidential way that tea had just gone in. He bustled to find an easy chair for Aunt Alice; told them at which table they must sit; and spoke so comfortably and encouragingly to them, that Aunt Alice felt quite reassured, and looked upon him as her natural protector.

The room into which they were introduced was a long and lofty apartment overlooking the sea. It was filled with small tables for its whole length, at which different parties of ladies and gentlemen

were drinking tea, and demolishing immense dishes of shrimps. A clatter of tongues arose on all sides; everyone seemed very merry. Aunt Alice and Marian were stationed by the attentive "John Waiter" at a table near the entrance,—for it was the rule that the newest arrivals took the lowest place, and worked their way upward by seniority of residence.

Every head was turned to look at the new arrivals; the old-established inmates looked somewhat supercilious, from their dignified perspective at the head of the apartment; and those in the immediate neighbourhood of Aunt Alice and Marian eyed them askance. John, the waiter, had been called elsewhere, and Aunt Alice felt sadly abashed in the presence of so many strangers.

A gentle, comfortable-looking woman,

who was making tea at a neighbouring table, good-naturedly invited them to come and sit with her; which they both gladly complied with.

A dignified woman, in plum-coloured satin and a thick cable of gold chain upon her ample bosom, after measuring them for a few moments from the altitude of her stately bearing, began to address Marian with gracious condescension, recommended the shrimps to her, and instructed her in the mystery of picking them, for Marian made small progress with them.

This majestic-looking woman had the air of a duchess, and her elaborate suavity and affability were very remarkable. She seemed quite aware that Providence had created her a superior woman, and was mildly acquiescent in her destiny, but still determined to bear her honours meekly.

The different tea-tables at length broke up, and as the tide was coming rapidly in, and the sun setting, everybody dispersed to the promenade in front.

"Shall we go, aunt?" said Marian, looking wistfully out.

"Thou canst go, lass; but I am overtired with my journey."

"Perhaps your aunt will take a stroll with me, whilst you look about, and make acquaintance with the young people," said the good-natured Mrs. Walmsley, who had invited them to her tea-table; and the majestic lady, whose name was Howarth, intimated to Marian that she would be glad of her company. Marian gratefully accepted this offer; and after seeing that Aunt Alice was well wrapped up, she set forth under the shadow of her self-constituted patroness.

The beach was thronged with gaily-dressed people,—for Blackpool is the Tun-

bridge Wells of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and enjoys a certain reputation for fashion. The ladies vie with each other to dress in the richest silks and satins, with the most stoical indifference to the destructive influence of sea air and salt-water.

Blackpool consists of a long straggling row of houses, built upon the edge of the cliffs overhanging the sea, which, to prevent the encroachment of the tide, and break the violence of the waves, have been defended by ramparts of stones; the tide comes up very strong, almost rising to a level with the houses, the spray dashing into the windows. The peculiarity most remarkable however is, that there is no visible sign of the season of the year, as not a tree is to be seen; except for the variation of heat and cold, it would be hard to discriminate between July and December.

Blackpool is a watering-place of great

repute, and is thronged with visitors every year from all parts of Lancashire and the neighbourhood. It was Marian's first view of the sea, and she had expected to be very much impressed by it; but the effect was vulgarised by the sight of so many finely-dressed people, all laughing loud and talking—nobody seeming to have the slightest idea of anything beyond enjoying themselves. Certainly, a congregation of persons at a pic-nic or a watering-place does look common-place to any dispassionate bystander not made a partaker in the good things going about.

Marian's patroness was a school-mistress, who had an establishment of some standing for young ladies; and whilst she was desirous to conciliate the parents of possible pupils, she was still more anxious to preserve her dignity from the romping hilarity which was going on around. She and Marian therefore pursued their stately

course alone, though she condescended to tell to Marian the names of the different people they saw, and also to question her about her family and friends. In the course of conversation, Marian happening to mention Chester as the place where she had been to school, it proved that Mrs. Howarth had been one of the head teachers in the same establishment, and had actually presided over the great girls at the time when Marian first went there as a little one! There is only one set of people in the world, and everybody would find out mutual friends and relations if they went to Kamschatka!

A loud bell was suddenly heard to clang.

"That is the supper bell, my dear: we had better return to the house. I shall always be happy to walk with you, and to cultivate our acquaintance," said she, with a gracious bow as they entered.

Marian found Aunt Alice placidly knit-

ting beside the open window of the drawing-room. The time had not seemed long at all, for she and Mrs. Walmsley had taken a great liking to each other, and Mrs. Walmsley knew a great many people whom Aunt Alice had known when she lived in Manchester, and had told her whom such and such young girls had married, who had died, and what had become of others—so that Aunt Alice had never spent such a pleasant evening. Everyone came thronging up from the shore—Aunt Alice and Marian accompanied Mrs. Walmsley in to supper. It was laid out upon an immense table, which went the whole length of a long uncarpeted room. An immense tureen of sago steamed at the top, and a corresponding tureen of rice-milk at the bottom, and all kinds of substantial dishes filled the intermediate space. Aunt Alice was preparing to take

a seat by her new friend, when a sharp, prim little woman, in a black satin gown, came up and pushed her aside, saying, in a sharp tone, "The new-comers always sit at the bottom of the table; I have been here a week, and this is my place; you have no right here."

"I am sure I ask your pardon, ma'am," said Aunt Alice, humbly; "I am a stranger you see, and I do not know the rules."

A succession of hungry impatient guests filled all the places in the neighbourhood, and Aunt Alice and Marian were unceremoniously pushed aside. Several squabbles arose, from aspiring strangers wishing to sit higher than they had any right to do; and the lawful owners of the disputed chairs supported their claims as stoutly as the court ladies of Louis XIV. defended their rights to *fauteuils* and *tabourets*. It would have been amusing at any other time; but

Aunt Alice and Marian were distressed at having done wrong, and stood rather disconsolately till some place should be left for them. Their old friend John, the waiter, at length caught a glimpse of them, and hastened to their assistance.

"If you will come this way, ma'am, I will find you a nice place; you see that gentlefolk are very tenacious of their rights; but you will go up higher the longer you stay. What shall I bring you ma'am?—a little sago for yourself and the young lady? It is a dish we are famous for."

Poor Aunt Alice was quite bewildered by so many strange faces, and began to feel very nervous; she whispered to Marian a wish to go to bed; so, instead of following the rest of the company after supper to the drawing-room, they went up to their bed-room; though it was long before they

could sleep, for the dashing of the sea, and the jingling of the piano, to which the rest of the company were dancing quadrilles and country dances till a late hour.

The next morning Marian was on the shore betimes, hunting for shells and pebbles—anticipating with great delight a ride on a donkey, and wondering whether Aunt Alice could be enticed into a boat, when the tide served.

Life in a boarding-house is always a disorganized state of existence; but the eating and drinking, the walking and boating, the feuds and flirtations, all make it full of idle bustle, and make the search after health by the sea-side a sufficiently pleasant pursuit. Aunt Alice found it noisy, and Marian's taste for refinement was sadly outraged; still there was a certain life and good-temper,—a joviality which was not without its agreeableness,

and they contrived to pass their time very tolerably. Every Saturday John Withers came to see them, and stayed until Monday. He found several old acquaintances, and very much enjoyed his holidays; and Marian enjoyed taking him all the walks she had discovered, and showing him everything that was worth seeing; and as to Aunt Alice, it was the very proudest day of her life when she first walked into that large dining-room leaning on the arm of John Withers,—thus showing all the assembled company that she belonged to him. "Look at thy father, lass!" whispered she to Marian; "of all the men who have been here, there has been nobody to compare with him. You may well be proud of him!

"Well, old lady, how fine you have made yourself to-day! I declare you look ten years younger. Blackpool has agreed with you any way," said John Withers.

"Ah!" said Marian, laughing, "Aunt Alice put on her best gown to-day, which she would never wear before; and as soon as she knew you were coming, she made me go with her to choose a new cap. It is all put on in honour of you!"

"Marian, lass, how canst thou let thy tongue run on so!" said poor Aunt Alice, looking down, and fairly blushing at being exposed.

"Never mind her," said John Withers, with a kind, pleased look; "thou hast made thyself look very well, and to-

CHAPTER VI.

THE aspect of commercial affairs was at that period peculiarly gloomy. County banks were breaking in all directions. The different joint-stock companies which had sprung up like mushrooms, were exploding and causing ruin and desolation, as if they had been powder-mines. Firms that had been considered beyond suspicion were every day declared insolvent;—no one knew any longer whom to trust, nor who would be the next to go.

The condition of the working-classes was of course very distressed, as the

weight of suffering pressed into their daily lives with a minuteness and heaviness of which those above them cannot form an idea.

Discontent went hand in hand with suffering; strikes and combinations to keep up wages added much to the general perplexity, and to the suffering which had prompted these struggles.

John Withers had been very cautious in his operations. He contrived to pay back Mr. Wilcox one instalment within three

this life is quite as wonderful as any other production of this weary world,—everybody is fitted with his peculiar burden, which is as heavy and individual in its painfulness as if no other sorrow existed.

John Withers possessed a stout heart, and no personal privation or suffering would have shaken his firmness; but the idea of "failing in business," and "becoming a bankrupt," was beyond what he could endure to contemplate. The image of his old master, as he recollected to have seen him stand, harassed and bewildered before his creditors, and the broken, cast-down, helpless look with which he went about ever after, haunted John Withers,—and though the idea of doubting God's providence never crossed his mind, still it was very difficult to feel any comfort in trusting to it.

Aunt Alice had her share in the suffer-

ings, perhaps the most difficult to bear—that of looking on whilst the individual she loved the best in the world was gloomily expecting his fate, without the power to help him, or to suggest a word of comfort, and without the excitement of the struggle. Every day when John Withers came home to dinner, she looked at his face to see if the worst were come. Poor old lady! no reality could have been worse than this terrible nightmare of sympathy and uncertainty;—it was what had

form combinations as unexpected as their effects are serious and widely spreading.

Of late years Mr. Cunningham had been collecting materials of knowledge and thought, and he now earnestly desired to employ them, and lead a life with some more definite aim than merely to pass his time or fill it up with personal matters. Social questions had not then begun to be put with the startling emphasis they have since assumed, but his recent travels amongst the manufacturing districts had given a shape and direction to his thoughts. He saw that the condition of the working-classes was daily becoming of more importance,—their ignorance, their sufferings, their strength, and their number, inspired him with the most profound interest, and he earnestly desired to devote himself to the amelioration of their condition. John Withers, in the conversations they had

held, appeared to him a man of practical and enlightened views; and it struck Mr. Cunningham that, in conjunction with such a man, he should be able to carry out the object he had in view. He accordingly wrote to John Withers, expressing his desire to be admitted into partnership, and offering to bring a considerable capital into the concern. "My object," said he, "is not so much to increase my means, as, by identifying myself with the manufacturing interests, to be better able to understand where the interests of the masters and workmen cross each other, and to see the practical workings of the relations between them."

When John Withers received this letter, he imagined that Mr. Cunningham was insane; he did not understand the practical devotion of life and fortune to the working out of an idea, although he had himself

been an instance of practical faith in his own strong bent towards mechanics; but that did not help him to understand how a man who had a large unembarrassed fortune could involve himself in the anxieties and uncertainties of business, for the sake of a vague idea.

Under these circumstances he wrote to Mr. Cunningham a full statement of his affairs, accompanied with a strong recommendation to wait till things were more settled.

In reply to this, Mr. Cunningham went down in person to see John Withers, who was quite as much surprised as either Aunt Alice or Marian, when Mr. Cunningham walked in one evening as they were sitting down to tea.

"I could not write to you all I had to say, and so I am come to talk matters over with you, if you and Aunt Alice will take

me in for a few days. I recollect how much I enjoyed my former visit, and I was glad of an execuse to come again."

"Well, I am sure we are glad to see you, sir," said John Withers; whilst Aunt Alice bustled about to get another cup and saucer, and to fetch a supply of honey for a guest who had so well appreciated her bees.

After tea Mr. Cunningham and John Withers fell into conversation on the business which had brought him down. John

between masters and men, and to have power to carry my own views into effect. The working-classes need men of character at their head to guide wisely the movement which has begun, and which it is in vain to repress. Education is the grand thing they need; education of the same kind and quality which is given to those above them. When the education of the lower-classes is spoken of, it is always treated as a kind of edge tool which must be sheathed in dogmatic religious instruction, as otherwise it would cut the fingers both of those who receive it and those who have rashly placed it in their hands. I should wish our workmen (if you consent to admit me into partnership) to be educated on the same principles as those on which we would wish our own children instructed. Until the State provides against the starvation of the mind as it does against that of the body, it is our

duty, as masters, to see that those who work under us shall have that instruction to which they are entitled as rational and accountable beings."

"You are quite in the right, sir," said John Withers; "and I am sure it is not I who will stand in the road of the poor folks being taught, only people will say we are lifting them up and making them dissatisfied with their station: not that I object, only the workpeople are in an unsettled state just now, ready to listen to any new-fangled doctrine that tells them they are ill-used, and they have already got very high notions of their rights."

"'The rights of property' and 'the rights of labour' are beginning to stand up in opposition to each other," replied Mr. Cunningham, "there will be a struggle, but there will be peace at last. The 'rights of property' are already in

possession of the sympathies of society; the other is looked upon as a 'word of fear;' all the sympathies and fears of society are engaged by the selfish sense of the need of protection at any price. The only idea of safety is that of consecrating and recognising the claims of property, and of treating as seditious and incendiary all attempts to recognise the rights of labour—treating as wild theorists and dangerous to society those men who would attempt to speak in behalf of those rights. A struggle has commenced already between the past and the future, which must be fought out in the battle of the present. We are at once both spectators and soldiers. The advocates of the rights of labour may seem to be vague and embarrassed in their movements—even ridiculous; but Truth endures for ever and ever,—and her judgment is not pronounced all at once; the whole

meaning of the struggle is only unveiled by degrees; that which to-day seems absurd will gradually seem more reasonable as the idea matures and is worked out."

"Ay, that's quite true," said John Withers, "many's the thing we look on as a matter of course to-day which when I was young would have sounded fairly crazy,—and to be sure, people may say in newspapers now what they would have got into trouble for years ago."

"Both sides, in the struggle that is now

even though possessing some heavenly truth, are, when first announced, wild, vague, and unstable; they require to be purified by the opposition with which they meet—to be sifted like wheat. By this process they become more and more practicable and rational; they assimilate more and more to the real heartfelt desires of mankind, and in the end they take their stand among the realities of life, the truths for which men will henceforth fight and die, and hold fast against all attempts at innovation. It is curious to trace this progress of a principle, from the first day when it was uttered almost unconsciously by its promulgator, through the travail and struggle and persecution which gives it shape and strength."

"Then, the ideas that the working-classes are getting about their rights and their claims, is one of those which

are fighting to be recognised?" said John Withers.

"It is in the throes of its birth," said Mr. Cunningham; "but it has, nevertheless, got itself seriously propounded. What is this right of property? It is the recompense earned and deserved by *work* that has been accomplished. What is the right of labour? It is that each should have the power to accomplish work. It is in the name of themselves and their children that those who already

also listen to the claims of those who are struggling to assert themselves."

"What should you say was meant by the rights of labour?" asked John Withers.

"The rights of labour claim the power of full development of all the faculties—the lessening and removal of *material obstacles* in the way of producing labour. It is very easy to exalt the legitimacy of absolute property, because the idea of the dignity of labour is not very widely spread, or at least not FELT, and the opposition between the two is made sharper, because it is very sweet to the serf to conquer privileges, as it places him directly in the ranks of the privileged; and it must be owned that the actual aspect of labour and of the labourer is not attractive, except to men truly religious, who work from a higher

motive than that of immediate success, or personal gain and loss."

"Well," said John Withers, "I believe you to be a good man, Mr. Cunningham, and I would rather have you for a partner just to talk and advise with, even if you brought nothing at all into the concern, than any one else I know, if he brought in twenty thousand. But don't make up your mind in a hurry; enthusiasm is bad in money-matters; just take a week to think over what I

"My good friend, I have already thought of everything, and I shall not change my mind; but for the sleeping upon it, I will take your advice, for I have travelled far to-day, and I am tired."

John Withers conducted Mr. Cunningham to the room prepared for him, but after wishing him good-night he returned to the room they had quitted. He had need to think over the wonderful turn his affairs had taken, and the brilliant prospect that was opening before him with such an addition to his capital. Delivered from the anxieties which were harassing him, he could make his business the finest in the county; "and with such a man to be my friend," thought he, in conclusion, "there is nothing I shall not be able to accomplish!"

Mr. Cunningham was very much pleased with the probity and conscientiousness of

John Withers, but he was not to be turned away from his design, and the arrangement of the partnership was put into train without delay.

CHAPTER VII.

THERE was another person in the family who interested him even more than John Withers, and this was Marian. He believed that he saw in her the foundation of a very fine character, though as yet it was immature and undeveloped. There was a simplicity and uprightness, joined to an extremely loving and affectionate nature, which endeared her to him, though she possessed neither special abilities nor any remarkable brilliancy of intellect. She was modest and teachable, and had an earnest desire to learn, which (as all men are pos-

sessed with an idea of their own ability to teach, especially to teach women their duties) was of course an excellent quality in his eyes. He was not exactly "in love with her," as the phrase is, for her character was scarcely matured enough to inspire it; but he felt a strong and tender interest in all that concerned her; and there was, although unavowed even to himself, a latent love for Marian in the friendship he felt towards John Withers. He certainly anticipated with much satisfaction the idea of training Marian's character, and watching over her happiness.

He joined her next morning as she was walking disconsolately in the garden, oppressed with a sick *ennui* of the monotony of her life,—arising naturally enough from the wakening up of desires and capabilities for which she had neither outlet nor occupation. She was standing

watching Aunt Alice's large bee-hive, when Mr. Cunningham stood beside her.

"What are you thinking of so intently?" he asked.

She started at the sound of his voice, for she had not heard his approach.

"I was thinking of the verse of Dr. Watts's hymn,—

'How doth the little busy bee
Improve each shining hour?'

and wishing that I was a bee, and had something to do in the world of some use, and then perhaps I should not be so miserable as I am."

"Come," said he, kindly, "you shall show me one of the pretty walks in the neighbourhood; and as we go along you can tell me what it is that makes you so miserable."

Marian was soon ready. "I can take

you a beautiful walk," said she, "if you will not mind having to scramble up and down some rocks. It is a beautiful wood in a ravine, and is said to be haunted. There are several spots of the kind; we call them 'cloughs' here. The river will be nearly dry, and we may manage to cross it, and so come home by a different road."

"That will be charming,—I am in a humour for a long walk; but are you sure it will not be too far for you?"

"For me? oh, dear no. But I will tell

upon our carrying some luncheon with us, as she was sure we should need it before we returned. And she has promised to have dinner an hour later,—a thing I never knew her do before: but she would find it quite right if you did not wish to dine till midnight; nothing you do is wrong in her eyes."

"I shall do my best to merit her good opinion of me," said Mr. Cunningham, smiling; "but now, give me the basket to carry, and let us be off."

They proceeded for some time in silence. They were both enjoying the calm air and the change of scene which every turn in the road presented; and, besides, the road at first was broken, and led them up the steep hills behind the house, which was not a state of things favourable for conversation. They at length reached the "clough," where the hills seemed to have

been shivered to their base by some grand convulsion; a brawling, noisy stream flowed between them, nearly choked up in some places by masses of rock, over which it boiled and tumbled in a thousand miniature waterfalls. The sides of the ravine were covered with large detached masses of rock; and trees clung tenaciously, with half-exposed roots, to the soil, or sprung from between the clefts of rock, clothing both sides of the ravine with a thick shade of trees and underwood to the edge of the water.

"Is not this a delightful spot?" said Marian, when they had scrambled down, and had safely reached a level track of grass on the banks of the river. "Look at the light on the trunks of those trees above us; and the shadows of those white clouds sailing over the water."

"It is certainly a charming spot," said

Mr. Cunningham. "And now let us rest upon this block of stone, and you shall tell me why you are miserable."

"We may as well see what Aunt Alice has put in the basket," said Marian, "for I am very hungry, and not miserable at all at this moment."

"Well, but perhaps when you are no longer hungry, and no longer making a pleasant excursion, you will fall back into low spirits; so let me hear what was oppressing you when I found you looking at the bees?"

Marian was occupied in taking the sandwiches and biscuits out of the basket, and in opening the flask of home-made wine which Aunt Alice had put up, along with a little silver mug, and she did not immediately reply to Mr. Cunningham. The refreshment was equally welcome to both; but after every morsel of provision had

been eaten, and the crumbs scattered to the birds, Mr. Cunningham laughed and said,

"Come, I think now we are sufficiently fortified to begin our inquiry into your misery."

"It looks all very ridiculous now," said Marian. "I am in very low spirits sometimes, and then everything looks black. I shall be miserable to-morrow, when I look back and think how pleasant to-day has been. One always is melancholy to look back on happy days which are gone:

they feel no interest in my pursuits. My father is occupied with his mill, and Aunt Alice with her bees and her knitting. My whole life seems stagnating. Whilst we were at Blackpool, I saw people in abundance every day, but they were not people I liked, and I grew very tired of being there, and wished myself at home; but now that I am at home, I feel as if I were buried alive. I am good for nothing. If I could even have energy enough to be very wicked, I should be happier; but I am stunned and stupid—nothing seems real, not even I myself. I must be wicked to feel in this manner, and there are days when I feel as if a black cloud were round me; and I suffer all the more from having nothing of which I ought to complain."

"My dear child, you are in a very morbid state of mind; you have more

energy than you know how to employ, and it is taking the disguise of a refined and fastidious wretchedness; and the danger is, lest you begin to fancy it a sign of your superiority, instead of thinking it what it is, the symptom of an unoccupied and undisciplined mind; but that you are discontented with yourself, is also a hopeful symptom in your case."

"If there were any human being in whom I could feel interested, who would be my companion, I should be happy," said Marian; "but I am alone—nobody cares for me, and nobody ever will care for me; for how can I hope to find any one, shut up as I am here?"

"My dear Marian, the talents, the energy, the leisure with which you are blessed, were not given you that you might exhale them in the idle enjoyment of emotion. Suppose you were to find

some one who, as you express it, would 'care for you'—would make you the first object of their life; it would not be a connection to rest in—you would have to labour to keep worthy of such companionship, and to fulfil the duties such friendship would entail upon you. Suppose you were to succeed in inspiring a profound passion in the heart of any hero your fancy can depict, you do not imagine that a rational being can repose all the days of their life in the enjoyment of the pleasurable emotion which you believe love to be?"

"Oh, yes," said Marian, earnestly, "I am sure that the only happiness worth calling happiness in the world must be to find some one to love with all our heart and soul, and to be the whole world to each other. If I once found any one who would let me love as I could

love, would it not go on strengthening to our lives' end?—would not all duties, all employments, follow naturally, as flowers grow after the seed is sown?"

"Your dream is that of all young and loving natures," said Mr. Cunningham; "but you only seek after emotion, and all the *ennui* and melancholy you complain of is nothing but the craving for it. Love is the purification of the heart from self; it strengthens and ennobles the character, gives a higher motive and a nobler aim to

being can bear the weight of an entire and undivided affection without staggering under the burden. At first this complete abandonment of yourself to your emotion may seem grand and devoted; but the object of it becomes weary, and when the stimulation of vanity has ceased, you will be thrown back upon yourself, broken with disappointment and humiliated to your very soul by finding that all your most precious things have ceased to be of any value. If you will examine thoroughly into your own heart, you will find that, bitter as this sounds, there is a reason; a *fact* is always true. There is idleness and weakness at the root of this apparent generosity. You are averse to the discipline of self-control, and no human being is, or ever can be, exonerated from this duty, imposed by Nature herself. You expect another to sustain the full

tide of your undisciplined energies—to guide you to that duty you refuse to do for yourself. Self-control, self-discipline, is the first law for both man and woman, from which no power can give a dispensation. Your present suffering arises mainly from having failed in this duty towards yourself. My dear child, it is only God himself who is entitled to say, 'Give me thine heart,'—and on him alone can we fling ourselves with all our weakness and our dependence. But this you

dormant; but now you must work and not dream: and I tell you for your comfort, that if you seek first your duties, and think of them, everything else that is good or needful for you will follow in good time. Remind me that I give you De Maistre's "*Lepreux d'Aoste*" to read when we reach home, and then see if you ever dare to indulge in repining thoughts again."

"But," said Marian, "tell me what I am to do?"

"To *do* is less than to *be*; we can teach machines to *do*. I cannot dictate to you the exact map of how you are to fill up your time—but if you seek diligently to know your duties, they will reveal themselves. Do not live to yourself; do not be always thinking about 'being happy.' What have you ever done to deserve to be made happy? What right have you

to expect Providence to shower down its blessings upon you? You are not yet competent to be the life-long companion of such a man as you desire to belong to: think rather of deserving than of enjoying; begin to live worthily *now*, and do not wait to begin a new life until you shall have entered on your dreams of happiness, and recollect that you are unhappy and dissatisfied because you are living selfishly, and because you are not seeking to do the duties that are lying

than ever the rest of the day. He read to her the beautiful little story he had promised to lend her, "*Le Lepreux de la Ville d'Aoste.*" He made her play to him, and Marian discovered to her surprise that he was an accomplished musician, and could both play and sing in a style which she was obliged to confess was even superior to Albert.

Mr. Cunningham had to leave the next morning, but the effect of his conversation did not pass away.

CHAPTER VIII.

Before the termination of Lady
laston's visit to Carrisford, Albert ha
duced her not only to listen to his
passionate declarations of love, but

She made a distinction which tolerably pacified her conscience, between that affection which is involuntary and uncontrollable by any promise or sense of duty, and that practical fidelity which, as a wife, she owed to her husband, and about which she believed no sophistical question could ever arise in her own mind.

She was quite sincere in this; but from the moment Albert knew his own influence, he had become her master. His vanity and his passions were alike roused, and he had no more intention of allowing her to respect her resolution, than the huntsman has of sparing the hare when the hounds are upon her track.

He studied her character for a fortnight, and then he believed it would be a mere question of sooner or later.

Lady Wollaston would have been very

indignant, could she have suspected his calculations; but "*chateau qui parle et femme qui écoute,*' have never been reckoned impregnable.

Lady Wollaston left Carrisford full of the strange, new happiness, of loving and being beloved. She believed that she should never know sorrow more. Her life had long been a stagnant calm, and now she rejoiced like a child in the "serene and gentle motion," without dreaming that it could lead her on to rapids, shoals, and certain wreck.

When women are once conscious that they are beloved, they desire only to rest in the sweet contentment of that certainty for ever. Lady Wollaston imagined that Albert was as tranquil and happy as she was herself. Her only thought was how to be worthy of the trust he had reposed in her; how to exercise for the best the

influence he had given her over his happiness. Engrossed by the intenseness of her own emotion, she did not look steadily at the nature of the man she had to deal with. HEARTS are seldom a winning suit for women in the game of life, because women are prone to dwell in their own emotions, in a state of dreamy intoxication, seeking to keep off all disturbing influences, that they may wrap themselves round with happiness, and dream in peace that it will last for ever.

Albert, with his great beauty, and the softness of manner, which looked like kindness of heart, the imaginativeness which veiled his profligacy, the passionate eloquence which always carried him away, and made whatever he said sincere for the moment, was a lover few women stood much chance of resisting if they once began to listen to him; whilst

the utter absence of any moral principle, an absolute ignorance of the difference between right and wrong, rendered him precisely the most dangerous man into whose hands Lady Wollaston could have fallen.

Lady Wollaston showed considerable address in inducing her husband to cultivate an intimacy with Albert, who soon became *l'ami de maison*, at Mayfield. Albert was immensely cautious lest any overt act of imprudence should arouse the jealousy of Sir Frederick, and open

which would be entailed upon him "as a man of honour."

Sir Frederick, however, was the best-disposed husband in the world, and did not show the slightest symptom of jealousy; he liked Albert, and accepted him for a companion and intimate friend, with an excellent grace. Sir Frederick cared very little for his wife; he had never troubled himself about her affection, but her haughty temper and calm, proud manner, had kept him considerably in awe, and he was not slow to discover the resource he possessed in Albert, when he wished to invite his sporting friends, or to set off on any private expedition, or to carry any point on which his wife would have opposed him; for though he never professed to be guided by her, yet he disliked her judgment to go against him. So long as she excited no remark,

and did not render him ridiculous, Lady Wollaston was left quite at liberty to amuse herself with whom she pleased. He did not suspect the amount of her affection for Albert, but he found himself much more comfortable, and thought her much more agreeable than had ever been the case before.

In spite of these propitious contingencies, Lady Wollaston's happiness was not undisturbed. In the first place there was the heavy sense of domestic treachery,

she may care for her husband. This self-respect was now clouded. She had, moreover, the mortification to feel certain that Sir Frederick placed no restraint upon her intimacy with Albert, only because he wished to deprive her of any pretext for making remarks upon his own conduct.

If anything could have deepened her dislike towards her husband into hatred, it was precisely his conduct at this crisis in her life. Instead of the strength and guidance she had a right to expect from a husband, he took part with the devil she was still endeavouring to keep at bay. It was strange that she should have felt it so bitterly, but she seemed to be given over to herself, no one caring whether she stood or fell; and there is no woman in the world, to whom this terrible loneliness would not be insupportable. No amount of violence from the murderous jealousy of

a husband can equal the dreariness of finding him indifferent to anything she may do.

Lady Wollaston had to pay the natural penalty of leading a divided life. Her love for Albert was intense, and seemed to be a much higher and nobler sentiment than she had ever known before. She felt that it made her a better woman, and brought into life many fine and genial qualities which had hitherto been torpid; all her faculties seemed to be set suddenly free, and she felt in her heart that people are human beings before all things, and that human relationships, even the most sacred, seem artificial and fade away when opposed to the broad strong instincts of human nature. There was a force and reality in her love for Albert that made all the moralities in which she had hitherto dwelt, seem false; the deception which she was practising appeared to her the

only sin of which she was guilty,—and that, because it was a desecration of the new spirit which had entered into her life.

It is a terrible crisis in a life, when all the principles of right and wrong which seemed as fixed and indubitable as the everlasting hills, break down, and are swept away before the stormy gust of temptation, leaving the soul trembling on the brink of a crime, against which they had professed to be a strong defence. Then the crime itself no longer looks as formerly,—one action standing out black, and large, and clearly defined, bearing upon it the brand of the decalogue;—but it seems endued with a strange affinity to human nature, the criminality deepening so gradually,—creeping on like the gentle darkening of twilight into night; until only the last step of all remains, that which stamps the name upon the deed, and it has grown

to seem a very little thing, no worse than the thousand acts which have preceded it.

Lady Wollaston was fast nearing this insidious vortex. To the temptations from within were added trials from without.

She had shown much more firmness and resolution than Albert had expected. At the end of three months, he was no further advanced than the day on which she left Carrisford. He was maddened with the idea of what Glynton would say

he began to feel the decorum and restraint of it a great bore.

If Lady Wollaston had understood the science of coquetry (that system of defence in which Nature has instructed the sex), she might still have retained her prestige with Albert, and continued to exercise an influence over him; but, unfortunately, she had not the least germ of coquetry in her nature (which is a great defect in a woman), she was carried away by her own emotions, and allowed him to perceive the full extent of his own influence; imagining that the more devoted she showed herself, the more firmly he would be attached to her in return.

She was proud of her affection, proud of her own power to love, and she disdained all disguise; it was by the intensity of her passion, that she sought to justify it.

Men have a natural aptitude to weary of tenderness, and Albert was both wearied and annoyed at this profitless display of affection. He began to change his tactics. —Instead of the refined and romantic devotion he had hitherto professed, he gave way to fits of diabolical ill-humour; reproaching her in vehement terms with selfishness, cold-heartedness, and with wasting the best days of his life and ruining his prospects by the selfish calculation with which she sought to retain him about

much wretchedness they signified; his flagging devotion was stimulated afresh on discovering that after one of these scenes, Lady Wollaston had been dangerously ill for some hours with a nervous attack that resembled catalepsy. For some time after this, he behaved better; but the devil within him, having once been fairly roused, could not again be laid. She still kept firmly within the limits she had prescribed to herself, but her victory cost her dearly; and he calculated more upon her suffering than upon her affection. He soon grew weary of her tears, and ceased to try to console her for his ebullitions of temper.

At length one day the bright idea inspired him, to threaten that he would plunge again into the life of profligacy he had renounced for her sake, and so strive to stupify his memory of her. "And

then," added he, "Lady Wollaston may add my ruin to the list of her other triumphs. You know your power over me," he continued bitterly, "you know that I have laid my life below your feet, and made myself your slave; you might have saved me, you might have made me good, and noble, and happy. I have loved you as man never loved a woman before, but you love yourself better than all the world besides. You might have saved me with a word,—and now my ruin will be upon your head."

with rage he flung out of the room without uttering a word, for he felt that he should kill her if he remained an instant longer.

CHAPTER IX.

THE misery of being displeased with one she loves, is to a woman far more painful than any offence that may have been committed; the need to forgive, to

Lady Wollaston's heart sickened under the dreary weight of silence. Sir Frederick went over to Manchester several times; but either he did not meet with Albert, or thought it unnecessary to speak of him; and Lady Wollaston felt too conscious to venture to inquire.

At length, by way of doing something, she went to Carrisford to spend a day with Mrs. Arl,—whom it must be owned she had, of late, very much neglected. Mrs. Arl was at home, and charmed to see her; but so far from being able to afford tidings of her cousin she inquired about him from Lady Wollaston. Albert had not been to Carrisford since her last visit. Mrs. Arl was, however, able to afford one vague and tormenting piece of information, which she did not withhold; it was, that a beautiful singer, from the Italian Opera Company in Lon-

don, was giving a series of concerts in Manchester, and turning the heads of all the young men for thirty miles round. "And I should not wonder," added she, making a happy guess, "that Albert is just now engrossed with her, — for he can resist nothing in the shape of music; and he is just at the age when young men are attracted by those sort of people."

Lady Wollaston returned home no wiser, but a good deal more miserable than she had gone out.

When she reviewed her acquaintance

part of his life, and giving him nothing in return but permission to revolve like a satellite round its planet? What right had she to act thus?

It would be too much to assert that she repented of that instinct of integrity which had kept her from disgracing her husband whilst under his roof, but she certainly determined to prove to Albert that no consideration for her own position or reputation in the world had weighed with her.

The day after her visit to Carrisford, as she was sitting in her morning room, her husband entered hastily,—Lady Wollaston was writing a letter, which she hurriedly concealed beneath a sheet of blotting-paper.

"You are always writing letters in these days,—what treason are you after now?"

He spoke jestingly and without the least intention, but Lady Wollaston was painfully affected by his words; she took a sudden determination, and said,—

"I will tell you everything,—I, at least, will not deceive you."

"What is the matter now?" said he, surprised. "I do not want to know anything,—it is no concern of mine; and I have something else to do just now than read women's letters."

"But there is something I must tell

what has agitated you this morning? Come, don't vex yourself, that will do no good. I came to tell you the news; we are ordered to Ireland, and must march for Liverpool the day after to-morrow,—what do you think of that, now? Tipperary,—a disturbed district, and be hanged to it! So, now I have told you, I will take my leave, for there is a great deal to be done."

Lady Wollaston made no attempt to detain him; the tidings he had brought only quickened her determination, making her feel how utterly impossible it was to separate herself from Albert. Hastily destroying the letter she had been engaged upon, she wrote the following:

"Albert,—An event, we might have forseen is come to pass. The regiment is ordered to Ireland immediately. I put

my destiny into your hands,—you are my master,—do what you will with me—I love you; but there is no need to tell you that now. I can no longer lead the life I have done,—true neither to you, nor to him who is my husband. I do not care for the world's blame,—do you? You have said you love me;—come and take me away, and let me be yours for ever. The world is wide, I will go wherever you please; only come and take me hence. H. W."

This letter she despatched by a mes-

compromise herself in some way, overruled his first thought.

Desiring the bearer to put up his horse and wait for an answer, he returned to the house to meditate on the best course to meet this unexpected crisis.

Once he thought of going to her and endeavouring to bring her to reason, but he did not like to encounter her tears, besides which, there would be the awkwardness of a personal refusal; for, of course he did not dream for an instant of committing the inconvenience of eloping with her.

He was annoyed at her going away. He was provoked at her folly in wishing to leave her husband, and considerably embarrassed how to excuse himself without breaking with her altogether; an extremity which he was not yet prepared to contemplate. After several unsuccessful essays, he achieved the following letter:

"Helen! you imprudent angel, what madness possesses you? Do you not see that it is the ruin of us both that you risk. My angel you must be calm. What a letter have you written me! my head beats, and my trembling hand will scarcely impress the paper. Why do you make an offer which I cannot accept, but which it maddens me to refuse. I have never disguised from you my position. I have no resources but what would be utterly destroyed by such a step as you now pro-

the means to fly from the world with you; how soon and how gladly would I obey your call, and come to your rescue from a thraldom which it distracts me to reflect upon. But there exists not at this moment any more reason why you should quit your husband, than any time since we knew each other. You have done nothing to forfeit his protection so far,—I am the only one who has been sacrificed. Knowing your ardent and impulsive nature I have always sought to guard you against yourself, and against impulses for which in the end you would have suffered remorse. There is nothing with which you can reproach me, except that I will not allow you to throw away name, fame, and station in a paroxysm of nervous and overwrought sensibility. I will join you in Ireland, or wherever you go. We shall again see each other; but for this end,—

for my sake, for your own sake, I entreat you to be prudent. It is best we take no leave. It might excite remark were I to come over—and it would be worse than death to tear myself from your dear presence. *Farewell!*—and may all good angels guard you until we meet.

ALBERT."

Albert having achieved this letter, after the destruction of nearly a quire of paper in unsuccessful essays, some of which were, he feared, too tender and too ambiguous,

though he still was not altogether without apprehension of a visit from Lady Wollaston.

Lady Wollaston meanwhile, sat crouched in a large chair, beside the fire, stupified by the very intenseness of her emotions, and unconscious of the lapse of time.

A knock at the door roused her; it was her maid, with Albert's letter. She read it quite through. She did not shed a single tear, but sat in the dull terror with which she would have viewed the solid ground open beneath her feet. That Albert, in whom she had believed so firmly, should have written such a false, insolent, and above all, so vulgar a letter, seemed like the impossibility of a bad dream.

The wreck of her own personal happiness did not affect her. She was crushed beneath the overwhelming sense of the worthlessness of the idol she had made.

On looking at the letter a second time, the insulting allusion to a renewal of their acquaintance roused an indignation which burned up every other emotion.

Conscious that she had virtually forfeited all claim upon her husband's protection as much as if her offer had been accepted, with a wild instinct of integrity she started up, and half mad as she was, went straight to the room where she knew her husband was engaged in writing on regimental business.

"Well, well; sit down and tell me what you have to say; but do not look so dreadfully calm—you might be leading a 'forlorn hope.' What has happened?"

Lady Wollaston, in a hard, steady voice, that sounded as if it came from an automaton, began with the account of the ball at Mrs. Arl's, the night of the opera, and with the mechanical fidelity of a daguerreotype, she named every incident that had occurred between herself and Albert since that time, down to the letter she had received an hour before, which she gave into his hand.

It was certainly a very astounding revelation to call upon a husband to listen to; and although the substance of his wife's confession did not take Sir Frederick altogether by surprise; yet he felt none the less embarrassed at having the truth so unexpectedly thrust upon him.

He walked up and down the room in

great perplexity, not at all knowing what to say that would be appropriate to the occasion.

"Bless my soul, madam! but this is an extraordinary tale you have been telling me;—what do you think yourself that you deserve?"

"I have no right to remain any longer under your roof—if you wish to send me away, I am ready to go. You will assign your own motive to the world for the separation."

keeper, whose obscurity would have been a protection against disgrace. To have contemplated an elopement with a worthless fool, like that Albert — why, heaven and earth !—only consider how it would have read in the paper !—Really, Lady Wollaston, I never took you for a fool before ! "

Sir Frederick had worked himself up to a high pitch of irritation in contemplating the possibility of such a contingency,—far beyond that which the actual occurrence itself would have caused,—provided no one had known of it. He resumed his walk up and down the apartment in chafed and annoyed silence. Lady Wollaston sat, without speaking or moving, looking fixedly at the fire.

" I do not see what I can do in the matter," resumed Sir Frederick, at length. " I cannot fight a man for refusing to run

away with you; and I am not disposed to excite impertinent curiosity by fixing a quarrel on him—a jealous man, I take it, is a fool—at least, he is always ridiculous.—

"Now listen to me!" said he, stopping before her, after a few more turns, during which he had appeared to be taking a resolution; "I never found you in a lie, nor in an equivocation, during all the years we have lived together; and if you can assure me, on your honour, that matters went no further than you have told me,—

you do not stand alone in the world—others are compromised as well as yourself. You have not gone and made any confidences on this subject to Mrs. Arl, or to any one else?"

"No."

"That is well; but your last letter, and possibly others besides, still remain in the hands of this young man. I will see that they are restored to you. Upon my honour, madam, you have had a fortunate escape! I own that your choice of such a man is what surprised me the most in this business. You cannot be aware of the small respect in which he is held amongst other men: no one believes a word that he says."

Lady Wollaston writhed under every word her husband spoke. Her position (deprived of the halo of romantic passion which had disguised its true aspect) was inexpressibly humiliating.

If her husband had desired revenge, he could not more effectually have devised it. She made no attempt to retort upon him the encouragement he had himself given to Albert, nor the friendship he had professed for him. She sat in silence until it should please Sir Frederick to end the scene.

"And now," continued Sir Frederick, "you had better retire, and endeavour to obtain the repose you must greatly need."

superiority over her;—he felt that he need never stand in awe of her again.

* * * *

The next morning, before Lady Wollaston had risen, her husband requested her presence in her dressing-room.

His clothes were splashed with mud, and bore evident tokens that he had come off a long ride. He had in his hand a small sealed packet.

"This," said he, handing it to her, "contains your correspondence with Mr. Albert Gordon. I need not tell you that I have not seen it. You will do well to ascertain that your letters are all of them there.

She broke the seals—a faint odour of violets exhaled from the letters.

Like one in a dream she looked over the letters.

"Well, are they all right? none missing?

"They are all here. Do you c
to read them?"

"Not for the world!" said Sir Fred
with energy; "they are yours, but I
there will be no advantage in ke
them."

A strange smile passed over Lady
laston's lips, as she said bitterly,

"They are of no value,—not eve
their owner."

One by one, she dropped them
the fire that was burning brightly.

hand that hung listlessly at her side, "we will never recur to this affair. I believe in my heart every word you have told me, and I think none the worse of you for what has passed. The best of us do wrong sometimes; and I own I have not behaved always as well as I might have done; but I have always respected you, and let us see if we cannot be happier together for the future. Do not give another thought to a fellow not worthy to speak to you."

Lady Wollaston withdrew the hand her husband held, and said,

"I will never forget that you stood by me when I had lost all claim upon you."

"Well, well, let us say no more about it. Let me see you look cheerful and comfortable; it is all I desire. But there are a thousand things to be done, and we start in an hour, so *au revoir*."

Sir Frederick left the room, feeling better pleased with himself, and his wife, and all the world, than he had done in all his life. The contrast between himself and Albert was decidedly in his favour, and his wife could no longer despise him; and it was the idea that she did so, which lay at the root of his estrangement from her.

CHAPTER X.

For many months after Marian's return home, things went on at Burn Brook as quietly and uneventfully as though change were not in the world.

Mr. and Mrs. Arl had gone abroad, and were spending the winter with Hilda and her husband at Nice; and except for her own recollections, Marian was quite cut off from the world beyond Burn Brook. Letters came occasionally from Hilda, but they were short, and entered into no details of her position. However much a woman may detest her husband the griev-

ance is too irremediable for her to find any comfort in talking about it; there is never any consolation in complaining of great troubles,—silence and forgetfulness are the only anodynes. Women have generally a Spartan fortitude in the matter of husbands: if they have made an unblessed choice, it is a secret they instinctively conceal from the world, cloaking their sufferings under every imaginable colour and pretence. They apparently feel that to blame their husbands is to blame them-

dross or to gold. She became established in the habit of steady occupation; she had a real desire to improve herself, and her efforts at self-cultivation almost deserved to be called study. She left off building "castles in the air;" and though there might still be a natural fluttering of Hope that some time she would be made very happy, still that hope was only latent, and did not disturb her contentment with her present lot. Albert was still embalmed in her memory, as the ideal of all that was brilliant and fascinating in man. She never expected to see another for whom she could ever care, and believed herself to be irrevocably constant to his image; but the recollection of him did not disturb her comfort, which is the first stage towards forgetting a lover altogether.

It was getting on for a year since Hilda's marriage, and three months since Mr.

Cunningham had been at Burn Brook, when one morning he arrived there unexpectedly, when there was no one at home but Aunt Alice. He was accompanied by a respectable middle-aged female, dressed in the debatable style between mistress and servant, which English Abigails affect.

Aunt Alice was somewhat fluttered by this apparition. Mr. Cunningham she did not mind about; but women, as everybody knows, spy out the deficiencies in household arrangements much sooner than men; wherefore good housekeepers have the instinct to keep them at a distance, unless specially prepared to receive them: which was not exactly the case this morning. The servant girl had been allowed to go out for a holiday; John Withers was in Manchester; and Marian had walked over to pay a visit to Mrs. Wilcox.

However the old lady bustled about to

get them some refreshment, and despatched a messenger for Marian; but what Mr. Cunningham had to tell her speedily drove all other thoughts out of her head.

He had been in Ireland, and whilst in Dublin had met his cousin who had been brought there for medical advice. The physicians were divided in their views of treatment; one prescribing steel medicines, another a course of German baths, another ordering her to the South of France, and another the bracing air of a mountain country; they all called her complaint by a different name, but all united in assuring Sir Frederick that his wife was in a very precarious condition, though there was no trace of organic disease.

Lady Wollaston every day seemed to have less life in her; the most serious features in her case were frequent faintings, which lasted an alarming length of time.

Her whole life had suffered collapse,—the discovery of Albert's worthlessness had seemed to take all strength and hope out of her. It was not his desertion so much, as the conviction that she had from the beginning been deceived in his character. She was like a person, who, having spent a lifetime in digging gold, should discover it to be nothing but worthless ore. Coldness and estrangement on the part of a dear friend may be endured, however painfully; but the evil without remedy,—that which cuts away the very root of our life, is, when a loved and trusted friend acts unworthily; no personal injury can be compared to that suffering; and this it was, that had deprived Lady Wollaston of all courage to endure her life.

The wild and desolate part of Ireland in which they were quartered, did not tend to arouse her from the profound melancholy

which every day settled thicker and heavier upon her. She sat often for the whole day gazing out upon the sea, which stretched as far as the eye could reach unbroken, except at low-water by a few black and craggy rocks; and also on the equally unbroken expanse of bog, which stretched between their house and the town of Kilcroona. Nothing could well be more desolate and depressing than the scene. Refusing, upon the plea of health, all the invitations of the few resident gentry in the neighbourhood, she saw no one and spoke to no one for days together. Her husband was a great deal from home, and seemed to make himself very happy; between hunting, and shooting, and fishing, and gentlemen's dinner-parties, and the excitement of having a "disturbed district" to keep in order, he was scarcely conscious that his wife was not in her usual health

and spirits, for she exerted herself to be as little disagreeable to him as possible. He was at length startled by the report of Mrs. Collins, her maid, who had been alarmed that morning by an unusually prolonged fainting fit on the part of her lady. Sir Frederick did all that was possible; hurried her off to Dublin, consulted all the physicians of any eminence, and entreated his wife to say where she would like to go. Meeting Mr. Cunningham one day in Sackville Street, he carried him home to

could ever have spoken on the subject. He had long since suspected her secret, and he knew how to sympathise with her, without enervating her still more by his pity. The relief that followed was inexpressible. She began from that day to recover her energy.

"I do not like the thought of your going back to be alone in that great desolate house," said he, one morning; "is there no one you would like for a companion?"

"No one; Sir Frederick's sisters are all fashionable fine ladies, and have besides families of their own; and I have no relations and no friends whom I could ask to stay, or indeed, of whom I should not tire in a week."

"You once asked me to prevail on her father to allow Miss Withers to visit you, —would you like to have her?"

Lady Wollaston paused for a moment, and then replied,—

"Very much, indeed,—I should like to have Miss Withers. But would her father trust her so far from home? and would she come?"

"I will answer for both; write an invitation, and I will fetch her myself; I shall like her to be with you."

With more animation than she had shown for a long time, Lady Wollaston wrote a letter to Marian. She despatched Mrs. Collins, her own attendant, with Mr. Cunningham, and arranged to remain in Dublin until she could bring word of the result of his mission."

These were the circumstances that led to Mr. Cunningham's sudden appearance at Burn Brook, and the reason why Mrs. Collins was with him.

It required some little time to reconcile

Aunt Alice to the idea of so long a journey: but when she understood from Mr. Cunningham how ill his cousin was, and how much she needed a companion; and when she had heard from Mrs. Collins (with whom she soon grew friendly) what a kind and noble lady her mistress was,—she yielded a willing consent, and began to busy herself "in looking up the lassie's clothes that she might be ready to start next morning."

When John Withers came in from Manchester, he and Mr. Cunningham had a private conversation, after which he was quite willing to spare Marian for a couple of months; somewhat to his own surprise when he came to reflect upon it afterwards."

Marian was the last to be aware of this event, and when she returned from Mrs. Wilcox, she found her trunk already half packed up.

"Well, Marian," said Mr. Cunningham, "you see we have settled that you are to go, without consulting you a word about the matter. I hope you do not dislike the plan."

"Lady Wollaston might have known by instinct how gladly I would come to her."

"Ay, lass," said Aunt Alice, "I knew thou wouldst be glad. It is a long way, and I misdoubt the sea for thee; but it was very considerate in her to send her own

suspected, unless, perhaps, it were Mr. Cunningham. Lady Wollaston ill! Lady Wollaston wishing to see her! It was one of her dreams come true.

The next morning the chaise was early at the door, and the travellers departed; Mr. Cunningham promising to see Marian safe under his cousin's care.

Nothing of any importance occurred during their journey. They arrived safely in Dublin, and as soon as Lady Wollaston was able to travel, they all proceeded to Kilcroona. Lady Wollaston's health still continued precarious, but a marked, though gradual, improvement began to take place.

Marian was such a companion as Lady Wollaston had long desired to find. They saw no company, but the time did not pass heavily,—at least, not with Marian, to whom daily intercourse with such a woman as Lady Wollaston could not be

other than a great advantage, and the foundation of a sincere and strong affection arose mutually between them.

Each knew the other's secret, although no confidence had been made on either side; but this unacknowledged and instinctive sympathy bound them all the more closely for its silence.

CHAPTER XI.

One afternoon, when Marian had been an inmate of Kilcroona House about a month, she and Lady Wollaston were sitting in the long rambling drawing-room which overlooked the sea.

It had been one of those calm, sunless days when one single unbroken cloud covers the whole sky. In the west there was now, however, a broad sullen-looking belt of red, showing where the sun was descending behind a bank of cloud. The tide was coming in sullenly, but neither wave nor ripple broke the face of the

sea, which advanced sluggishly, like a huge sheet of melted lead.

For some time neither of them had spoken. Lady Wollaston was brooding over her life, which seemed as waste and desolate as the scene without; but the attention of Marian was roused by seeing a dark mass advancing slowly along the pathway of the bog, of which they had a view from the side window. In a few moments it became more distinct, and at length in the gathering twilight she dis-

sudden animation, "there has been an accident! not a murder, surely!—and they are bringing him here, and Sir Frederick away! What shall we do?"

Another instant, and the group became more distinct.

"That is Sir Frederick's horse! the one on which he left home this morning!" cried Lady Wollaston, now thoroughly alarmed, and they both hastily went to see what had happened.

At the hall-door they were met by a gentleman, one of the magistrates for the county, who had dined there the previous day.

"Sir Frederick has met with an accident, not fatal,—not necessarily fatal. Do not, I entreat, my dear madam, agitate yourself. They are bringing him here, and the sight of your distress might have a serious effect upon him."

"What is it that has happened, Mr. Burke? Do not keep me in suspense; Let me know the worst!"

"Sir Frederick has been shot at, and unfortunately he lay some time before he was discovered; but I repeat that all may yet be well, only do not let him see you; the sight of your distress would agitate him, and the least agitation, as I need not tell you, must be avoided. Let me entreat you to retire until the doctors have examined the wound. Where can he be taken? If you will direct a mattress to be brought into this room, they need not bear him further. Every step seems to cause him great pain."

Lady Wollaston, pale as death, but almost as calm, assisted to procure lights, and to arrange an extempore couch in the dining-room. She seemed to be suddenly endowed with the energy and

promptitude of a dozen ordinary attendants. Mr. Burke, who was no stranger to these kind of "accidents," knew all that would be required, and by the time the party arrived at the hall-door, everything was in readiness. The bearers brought in Sir Frederick. His clothes were dabbled with mire and blood; his face was pale and rigid, and he seemed to be already dead; but a spasm of pain which contracted his features, and a deep groan as they laid him down, revealed at once his life and suffering.

The surgeon of the regiment and the chief practitioner in the neighbourhood were both in attendanee. They desired that the room might be cleared at once. Lady Wollaston paused for an instant to look upon the bruised and bleeding form of her husband, and then she quietly went away with Marian and Mr. Burke,

back into the room they had so recently quitted.

At her earnest entreaty, Mr. Burke returned to the dining-room to bring her the opinion of the surgeons. She and Marian remained alone. The room was only lighted by the dull gleam of the fire, which was nearly burnt out, and by the lights which shone across the bog from the distant town. Marian sat down upon a low stool beside Lady Wollaston, and took her hand without speaking.

They sat listening to the dull muffled noises in the next room. It seemed to be hours before the door opened. At length Mr. Burke and one of the surgeons came with a light, which nearly blinded the two anxious watchers.

Both the gentlemen looked grave, and neither of them seemed to like to be the one to speak.

"Let me know the truth," said Lady Wollaston, quietly; "I see you think ill of the case."

"We must hope for the best," replied the surgeon; "nature works wonders sometimes, and I have seen far more desperate cases recover. We must hope, and at present there is no reason why we should not. Sir Frederick must be kept quiet; Mr. M'Quain and myself will take it in turns to be with him. I would recommend rest to you after this severe shock; you can do Sir Frederick no good, and the least emotion in his present exhausted condition would be fatal."

"You have promised to remain," replied Lady Wollaston, "and I will act in all things under your direction; but he must have a nurse, and that nurse will be myself. I shall not leave him—it is useless to waste time and strength in words. I insist upon

my right to be with my husband,—I will not agitate him."

Both the surgeon, Mr. Burke, and Marian, tried all forms of entreaty to induce her to forego her resolution, but in vain; there was more working within her heart than any of them guessed, or knew.

After giving directions for all possible accommodation for the medical men, Lady Wollaston took possession of her post, whilst they were taking some refreshment.

you will make yourself ill. Where is Carlton?"

Carlton was a young officer in Sir Frederick's regiment, with whom he was very intimate, and who was much attached to him. A messenger had been sent off for him immediately—it was the first direction Sir Frederick gave when he was found lying where he had been struck down. A low knock at the door came as Sir Frederick spoke: it was his servant, returned with the tidings that Lieutenant Carlton had that morning gone to Dublin for ten days, on leave.

"Let him be sent for directly; he will come back. I hoped he would not go to-day. How miserably unfortunate—I shall be gone before he returns!"

"Lady Wollaston expedited a messenger, and herself wrote the note to hasten his return; but there was little hope that he

could arrive under two days. Sir Frederick groaned with impatience, and tossed restlessly upon his couch. The surgeons visited their patient, and administered a composing draught. Sofas had been prepared in an inner room, for the surgeons and Mr. Burke, who insisted upon remaining; in another half-hour all the house was sunk in repose, and Lady Wollaston alone watched in the chamber of the dying man.

We all care for even lightly-esteemed relatives a great deal more than we suspect until we come to lose them—the near prospect of death consecrates alike the past and the future. As she sat there in the strange silence of that night, which seemed to make sounds out of its own stillness, Lady Wollaston looked back upon the years they had spent together in the closest relationship of life. It was a joyless retrospect, but all the coldness and blame

with which she had habitually regarded her husband, seemed now, by some transformation, to belong to herself, rather than to him. Her own coldness and pride and estrangement seemed to be at once the cause and the effect of the little happiness they had felt together. Conscience, which is never wise, except with the wisdom that comes after the fact, now spoke like an oracle; and, without pity or remorse, showed her the miserable failure that her whole life had been. It is only at rare moments that we see our life in its true meaning and result—it is shown as by a lightening flash of consciousness in its true significance. The desire is dead which hurried us on with an unresisted impulse; and for a very short time we can discern ourselves as we really are; but the instant we are called upon to act, the mist of self-love and self-deception again gathers over our path, and we go on as impulsively as before.

Lady Wollaston sat thus in the cold, pale judgment-light of conscience, which took all the colour and illusion out of the past.

Towards two o'clock, Sir Frederick woke out of a troubled doze, and asked again for Carlton. His wife felt pained that she went for nothing with him; he neither asked for her, nor spoke to her, and seemed quite unconscious that she was beside him. The surgeon arose, examined the dressing of the wound, to see that it was in its place, administered the medicine, and again retired. Sir Frederick continued restless, muttering incoherently. Towards daylight he fell asleep; and the surgeons both professed to regard it as a favourable symptom, and prevailed upon Lady Wollaston to seek some repose. The ball had entered the groin, and Sir Frederick's wound was mortal; neither of the surgeons had entertained any hopes from the beginning, except as to the length of time that might elapse

before the termination; but they considered it professional to conceal the fact from his wife, and from the patient himself. However, Mr. Burke, as a magistrate, took Sir Frederick's deposition, and gently hinted that he should settle any affairs he might have upon his mind. This intimation threw the dying man into such evident distress, that the surgeons, who fancied it arose from fear of death, interposed.

When Lady Wollaston (who had been kept away as long as possible) returned, she was shocked at the change a few hours had wrought.

He did not speak, and she fancied he slept; but when her head was turned away he lay regarding her with a look of dumb, earnest anxiety.

"I have sent again to Carlton's rooms," said his wife, turning towards him on hearing him move.

"I shall not live till he returns," replied her husband.

"Is there nothing I can do—nothing I can write for you, to relieve this anxiety? I will hear what you tell me as though I heard it not, and tell him faithfully. Let me be of some comfort to you in this extremity. I would give my life to save yours."

"You are very good, Helen; but I am going to die; you cannot save me, but you might make me die in peace."

"Tell me?—I will do anything."

She placed her hand under his head

letters of mine you find lying about,—let Carlton have them all."

"I promise to do as you desire."

"Well, there is something that lies very heavy at my heart. I ought not to tell you, perhaps;—but I had rather leave it in your hands than his; if you will undertake it?"

He looked into her eyes with a searching and terrible anxiety,—

"Only tell me what you wish,—I will not be unworthy of your trust."

"A young girl has been foolish enough to follow me here. Her family are respectable tradespeople, they think she is on a visit to a relation; she will come to harm if I die. I swear to you I did not encourage her to come. You must send her home. Do not let her want. She cares for me more than I deserve, and the thought of her hurts me more than any-

thing else; this is why I was so anxious to see Carlton,—but if you say you will be good to her, I can die happy. Things look so different when one comes to die to what they did when one was alive and well."

"And is it this which has been troubling you?—why did you not tell me at once? Who could feel so much for this poor girl as I can?—be assured I will take care of her."

"Yes, but do not treat her as though she

"Yes, but do not let it be in a grand stately way; and do not let her be ashamed of herself for having thought well of me."

Lady Wollaston's tears fell heavily upon her husband's face, as she leaned down to catch his words which came with difficulty: "Oh, Frederick, she said, remorsefully, "if I had behaved differently to you, you would have loved me too, and I might have made you happy?"

She felt bitterly in this moment that she had earned herself no place beside her husband.

"Don't cry, Helen, it hurts me to see it. But if you will be a friend to this poor girl I will bless you, and nobody will think ill of her if you take her up."

"There shall no ill be said of her that I can prevent. I will in all things act towards her as though you saw me. And now tell me you forgive all my pride and

coldness, and all I have ever done against you."

"Indeed you have only been too good for me all along. I was never clever enough to deserve you."

At this moment Helen would have given up anything in the world for one word of affection from her husband; she sobbed bitterly;—all her love for Albert, all her recent grief seemed shrivelled, worthless exaggerations, besides the array of broken duties and unfulfilled responsibilities which

common womanish jealousy, and he was sorry he had told her anything, though he felt a full reliance upon her honour that she would do all she had said.

Hitherto the pain from his wound had been comparatively slight; but it now became almost intolerable: the agitation of the conversation had increased the fever. The doctors arrived for a consultation; but the result remained the same, and they gave it as their opinion he would not survive the night.

When Lady Wollaston was again admitted to his room, it was evident that he was fast sinking: he was quite sensible, but did not speak; he fell into an uneasy stupor for some hours. At length he suddenly opened his eyes, and seeing his wife, said, "God bless you, Helen!"—after which he appeared to relapse into unconsciousness, muttering to himself from time

to time. At length shivering and convulsions came on,—and he died about the same hour he had been brought home on the previous day. Helen remained with him to the last. As she left the room, when all was over, she saw, in passing across the hall, a young woman, wrapped in the common blue cloak of the country, sitting upon the hall steps and weeping bitterly.

An English footman was sending her away. "Are you not ashamed, young woman

herself,—you ought to be ashamed. Go away directly."

"You have no right to drive away any one who wishes to see me," said Helen, with dignity; and taking the poor broken-hearted girl by the hand, she led her to her own room.

CHAPTER XII.

THE shock of her husband's death, the sudden and terrible manner of it, and the fatigue of watching beside him, told severely upon Lady Wollaston's impaired

wild; frenzied grief, she had expressed a wish to return to the cottage where she lodged; she desired to be alone. Lady Wollaston considered that on the whole it was the best course to take. She would have accompanied her herself, but was utterly unequal to the exertion; so she consigned her to the care of Mrs. Collins. It was a clean and comfortable dwelling, inhabited by an English farmer and his wife, and was very superior in its accommodations to the general run of Irish farm-houses.

After undressing the poor girl with her own hands (for she was now quite bewildered and stupified with grief, and seemed unaware of anything that passed), Mrs. Collins laid her in bed, and sat beside her until she fell asleep. She then gave strict charge to the farmer's wife to watch carefully over her, improvising at

the same time a distant relationship with the family, to account in some degree for her anomalous position. She deposited money enough to cover all expenses, and to relieve the good woman from all fear of being a loser by any kindness she might show. The woman was undoubtedly puzzled by the turn affairs had taken; but it was "no longer her business to ask any questions."

When Mrs. Collins returned, she found that Lady Wollaston had been obliged to

and answering inquiries off Lady Wollaston's hands.

The murder of Sir Frederick caused a great excitement in the public mind; the papers, English and Irish, were filled with it. Government offered a large reward; and the police strained every nerve, but without success. There was little doubt but what Sir Frederick had fallen the victim to a conspiracy: although many were taken up on suspicion, nothing could be positively established,—and the general belief was that he had been shot by a person or persons brought from a distance for that purpose, who had afterwards effected their escape to America. This supposition was confirmed, some years afterwards, by the confession of a man who was hanged for his share in burning a dwelling-house and preventing the escape of the inmates.

When Lady Wollaston was able to leave her room,—and she for the first time dressed herself in her deep widow's mourning, and descended to the room where she and Marian had been sitting the night when her husband was brought home mortally wounded,—it was a new life that began for her. The past lay far behind, like a troubled and confused dream.

Clarissa Wendover still remained at Redmayne Farm; she too had been ill,

plan for her, and she wished to become acquainted with her first. She had now an opportunity of seeing her own experience as it had been worked out by another. What Clarissa had done for Sir Frederick, Lady Wollaston had been on the point of doing for Albert; but the balance of "extenuating circumstances" was decidedly in favour of Clarissa. Lady Wollaston was surprised to find how differently she was disposed to judge the same actions, and how little self-love she felt towards "her own likeness in another's face!"

Clarissa came, dressed in mourning almost as deep as that of Lady Wollaston. She was a pretty girl, with a lovely complexion, and drooping ringlets, but looking altogether very like a plump wax doll. At first she was much affected, and wept bitterly; but when that sub-

sided, Lady Wollaston felt almost provoked at the complacent style in which she spoke of her attachment to her husband, and the cool tone of equality with which she referred to "their mutual loss." Clarissa was not in the least abashed at her position, nor seemed to have any idea of regretting the step she had taken. She appeared to think that reserve was now superfluous, and she gave Lady Wollaston an account of the rise and progress of her acquaintance with Sir Frederick in a

had been at the root of the matter. She was the daughter of a respectable grazier; who, having made money, had given her an education of as much music and French, drawing and dancing, as could be conveyed in two years' schooling, at an establishment for young ladies of some repute in the neighbourhood; and then expected that she would come home and be a comfort to him, as his wife had died whilst Clarissa was at school. The result of an imperfect education, without any maternal surveillance at home, —idleness,—*ennui*,—and unlimited pocket-money, may easily be conceived. Clarissa was endowed by nature with a great deal of sentiment, and a love for officers in general. She had the gift of writing verses; and had composed a volume of poems, in which nothing but officers of various denominations figured,—but she

had kept clear of any serious mischief, until the arrival of Sir Frederick in the neighbourhood. He was taken with her as a pretty girl, and flattered by her poetry,—which he considered equal to Lord Byron's; and extremely touched by her partiality and admiration for himself, which speedily grew into what she believed to be an "uncontrollable and unhappy passion"—which, however, was an occupation rather than the misery it might have been expected; the result of all was that when the regiment

and even then tried to prevail upon her to return: but she remained, and Sir Frederick was as much in love with her as it was in his nature to be with any one.

"But your father!" said Lady Wollaston, when, with an air of sentimental virtue, Clarissa had concluded her history, rather more at length and more *couleur de rose* than we have detailed it,—"But your father, is he not dreadfully uneasy about you all this time?

"Oh no, he believes me at my friend's country house," replied Clarissa, sweetly.

"But if he had discovered your conduct, it would have broken his heart,—did you never think of that?"

"Ah, yes," replied the young lady, with a sigh; "but a strong passion, like mine, makes one very hard against everybody else in the world;—you do not know what an engrossing passion is."

"But if your father had died, — would you have felt no remorse for leaving him?"

"No,—I cared about nothing and nobody, except him who is gone;" and she burst into a fresh passion of tears.

When she was a little calmer she opened a reticule that hung on her arm, and taking out a packet of papers, she said,—

"I have brought you some of the poems I wrote to him,—I thought you might like to see them. He used to admire them; and I shall be glad if you will accept this copy of my book of poems. I have written your name in it."

She presented a stunted-looking volume bound in flaming scarlet, all over straggling gold lines, as she spoke; Lady Wollaston turned over the leaves. The poems were all about officers; — ballads about love affairs, in which an officer was always the hero,—sonnets to a young cuirassier,

—stanzas to a lancer,—and an address to a young "standard-bearer;" as she poetically termed the ensign of the —th foot, to whom it was written.

"But, how did you get your book published?" asked Lady Wollaston, in bewilderment.

"Oh a stationer and printer in the town owed father some money, and he offered to print it for me very cheaply, and I persuaded my father to let me have it done; and he said I might."

"Did you sell many copies?"

"Oh yes, father sent them round by his traveller; and all our friends took a copy. I made enough money to buy a beautiful locket for *His* hair;—but perhaps I ought not to tell you that."

"Why not?—it seems to me you have told me things of more consequence."

"Ah! yes; but it might look like triumphing over you."

It was evident that Clarissa considered her book of poems as her diploma of superiority over Lady Wollaston.

"I sent copies of the work," she continued, "to many distinguished literary characters,—who all replied in the most flattering terms."

"Indeed!" said Lady Wollaston.

It was evidently a great comfort and satisfaction to Clarissa to talk of herself and her poetry. She had talked herself almost into good spirits by the time dinner was announced.

"Good heaven!" thought Lady Wollaston to herself,—"and this is a *grande passion!*"

After dinner Marian again withdrew, and Lady Wollaston endeavoured to lead the conversation to some practical result. Her disposition to befriend this poor, pretty, foolish girl, and to keep her out of harm's way for the future, continued as strong as

ever; but she could not make her, as she once intended, her own companion. The only course seemed to be to get her home as soon as possible.

"Well, and what do you think of doing? Have you any plans for the future?" asked Lady Wollaston, gravely, when they were again alone.

Clarissa burst into tears.

"I have no hope for the future," she sobbed; "my life is a wretched burden. I am an outcast, and I do not care how soon I am laid beside *Him* in the cold grave."

"Would your father receive you, if you returned?"

"Yes, if I went; but I hate home,—it is utterly uncongenial."

"Well, but it is your duty to return to your father,—he is perhaps suffering cruel anxiety about you; if he died in

your absence, would you not feel remorse?"

"No, I care for nothing; I have lost *Him* who was all the world to me!"

"You shall write to him this afternoon, and tell him where you are. I will write also, and say that I will bring you myself when I return to England; and that in the meanwhile you are with me,—it will prevent all gossiping."

Clarissa took all Lady Wollaston's kindness as a matter of course. She wrote to her father; and Lady Wollaston was

That night Mr. Cunningham arrived; Marian had written for him, by Lady Wollaston's direction: and his arrival was a great source of gladness to both of them.

CHAPTER XIII.

Lady Wollaston, for the first time in her life, had now full employment for all her energy; and although weakened by her illness, and the severe shock she had

Wollaston, "that I have been kept from being in the position of that poor unfortunate girl? I feel as if I never could be thankful enough for my escape!"

"My dear cousin, it is undoubtedly a source of comfort that you are not a fool; but the resemblance between yourself and Miss Clarissa seems to me purely negative. How have you got on with Marian?"

"I owe more than I can tell to you for making me acquainted with that dear girl. Her company has been an inexpressible comfort: what I should have done without her in all the troubles of the last few weeks, I cannot tell. She is a fine creature; and living with her has been like living in a pure mountain air. It is not what she says, but what she *is*, that makes her value."

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arrears of duty, that I desire life only until I have in some measure redeemed the time that is past. I have been thinking seriously of late what there is I can do, and I wish you to make my plans practical. I do not particularly admire this country, or the people in it; but I think I shall settle here amongst them, and see what the leaven of good intentions and common sense will do in my immediate neighbourhood. I have no ties or duties to call me elsewhere, and these are just the most miserable and destitute people I have ever seen."

"You surely do not dream of anything so romantic. With your refined habits and fastidious taste, it will be martyrdom; and the amount of good you can effect will be very small. The people about here are scarcely human beings;—you will be murdered yourself."

"Well, in my misery and self-will, I prayed that I might die; and if death were to come to me when I was trying to work, would not that be a more honourable lot?"

"But you will have no society; not a rational being to speak to."

"Society!—Good heavens! have I not all these years had the best of society, and what good came out of it? There will never be a lack of volunteers to fill up the vacancies in good society. I feel no

dise of peace and order spring up round you; you will have to work without seeing any result of your labours. You are an enthusiastic woman, and I do not wish to see you plunge into work above your strength, and grow weary, and lose your faith. Try your hand at something lighter and more promising than the west of Ireland. Come and help me with my workpeople in Lancashire; you will then be near me, near Marian, and a comfort to us all."

Lady Wollaston shook her head.

"No; you and Marian will not need me. It is precisely the difficulty and repulsiveness of this task that is its inducement. What have I ever done?—What am I, that I should think of being happy and comfortable? I have scruples of common sense against entering a convent; but I tell you that the spirit which

leads both men and women to renounce the world, is the true and only principle to work from. I have no idea of working out my salvation, it is not a point I feel anxious about,—but I do earnestly desire to find some employment worthy to fill the life which hitherto I have so miserably wasted. I feel an inexpressible pity for these wretched creatures, who are scarcely human beings. Other women have not shrunk from leaving country and home, and civilized life, to go and live amongst savages, and be missionaries amongst them. Why should not I remain to minister to these of my own race and kindred? There is nothing romantic or exalted in it; hundreds of other women have done more. There will be a fever or a famine amongst them before long, and then every help, however slight, will be needed."

"How shall you set to work?"

"I shall take counsel, and work under the advice of the priest of the district; and under that of the Protestant clergyman also, if there is one."

"Well, my dear cousin, I will not gainsay your projects, but wish you God speed. For all that was morbid, and false, and ill-placed, and mistaken, in your past life and affection, you have suffered; but every emotion that was true and worthy has returned with a blessing into your own bosom. The past is *not* a waste,—for through it you have been purified and made strong. Henceforth your love and your life will alike be noble; for you seek no personal or selfish aim. Do you wish now that you had been spared a single hour of suffering?"

"Oh, no! no!" said Lady Wollaston, with her eyes gleaming through the tears

of highly-wrought emotion; "but how have I deserved to be instructed instead of broken to pieces?"

Mr. Cunningham looked at his cousin with something akin to reverence. She seemed to have come out from the past, and to have begun whilst yet on earth the "new life," which men generally insist upon deferring till beyond the grave.

* * * *

The arrangements of Lady Wollaston's affairs were completed in a wonder-

daughter, begging her to come home as soon as possible; and on one fine morning, about six weeks after Sir Frederick's death, the whole party, consisting of Clarissa, Marian, Lady Wollaston, and Mr. Cunningham, started on their journey towards England.

Clarissa's father (an easy, quiet, unpretending man,) received his daughter in the kindest manner. He had been uneasy at her long silence, and was on the point of coming to fetch her home, when Lady Wollaston's letter reached him. The manners and appearance of that lady quieted his anxieties and suspicions, if he had any; and Miss Clarissa herself had so far profited by the representations of Lady Wollaston as to feel very glad to be reinstated in the comfortable home she had once so madly and ignorantly cast away. She promised Lady Wollaston, with many

tears, to be more discreet and dutiful for the future.

Lady Wollaston had the satisfaction of hearing that she kept her word. She became what is called "decidedly serious," about twelve months after her return home; and married a very eloquent and respectable young Methodist preacher, highly esteemed in the Connexion,—who with characteristic sagacity had discovered that she was as interesting for her worldly possessions, as for her spiritual graces.

Lady Wollaston spent a week with Ma-

entreaties to prolong her stay, departed to begin her self-imposed labours; and Marian settled down to her usual employments at home. She did not feel the separation from Lady Wollaston so much as she expected, because it so happened that Mr. Cunningham was a great deal more at Burn Brook than formerly.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE partnership between John Withers and Mr. Cunningham had been highly profitable; the business had flourished; the capital brought in by Mr. Cunningham had enabled John Withers to extend the concern: his caution and moderation were as conspicuous in the administration of large affairs, as they had been on a more limited scale,—but he himself seemed to keep pace with his fortune; and although he continued to reside in the old place, and his habits were as abstemious and simple as ever, still an indescribable air

of culture and refinement was visible in him, partly from extended intercourse with society, but chiefly to be traced to the influence of his partner. Some time after they had commenced partnership, Mr. Cunningham's sister married,—which caused him to break up his establishment in town, and take a house in the neighbourhood of Burn Brook, where he resided a portion of every year. The acquisition of a man of his character and fortune was an event in the neighbourhood, and he soon made a circle of acquaintance, comprising all that was most cultivated and intelligent in that part of the county. Thus Marian had opportunities of seeing many intelligent people, and of mixing in a society more congenial to her tastes than she had hitherto enjoyed when at home.

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men, was understood. The mere possession of riches ceased to be the one thing needful in the estimation of the wealthy manufacturers.

The example of Mr. Cunningham did more than his precepts to introduce a more liberal and enlightened employment of riches. In his travels he had collected choice books, pictures, and curiosities. The chief of these he had conveyed to his new residence; and though the rich millowners were far from understanding their value, yet they gradually became desirous of possessing similar treasures. At first, it was a species of Fetish worship: they began to buy pictures and engravings without anything higher than a vague idea that they were worth the money, and that there was a certain distinction in possessing what they persisted in calling "articles of bigotry and virtue;" and although many

of the old race of spinners and mill-owners would still sit in the kitchen and smoke their pipes, leaving their drawing-rooms full of beautiful things which they thought much too grand to live amongst, still a taste for art, and a respect for cultivation of the intellect, had begun to make itself felt. As to the workmen in the employment of John Withers, the improvement in their condition was very striking. A Lyceum had been established, to which Mr. Cunningham had presented a hundred volumes, to serve as the beginning of a library; and John Withers supplied it with some London newspapers, and the best provincial ones, together with such of the periodicals as Mr. Cunningham recommended. The subscription was threepence per week,—for which they had the use of a well-warmed and well-lighted reading-room, and access to the library. This arrange-

ment had superseded, in great measure, the dangerous attractions of the tap-room. A yard where they might play at bowls and skittles was attached; a large room, too, had been built and fitted up with desks, &c., and a competent schoolmaster engaged, to give instruction for two hours every evening to all who chose to avail themselves of it. Mr. Cunningham had also presented the school with a small telescope and a microscope; and the wonders these instruments displayed gave a great impulse to the desire for knowledge in the hearts of these rude and half-savage men. The change developed in their habits and manners was most striking; they seemed to belong to a different race of beings.

With education came also enlightened ideas of self-control and self-government; they no longer spent their wages in sensual dissipation; their notions of enjoyment

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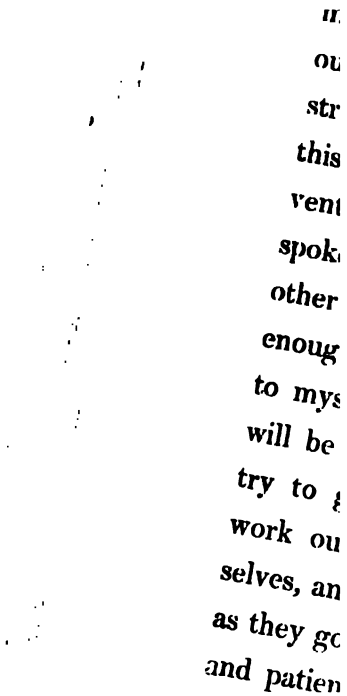
money more. We are driving a good trade now, but times won't always continue this way; and if the men could just be taught to depend on themselves, to provide against a rainy day, it would be better than even their schooling. If they would but learn to save, they might come to be masters themselves, and have a better start than many of us had in the beginning. They might save money and go into partnership amongst themselves, or they might join and build themselves better houses, and two or three families might live together in more comfort than they have now, and for less expense."

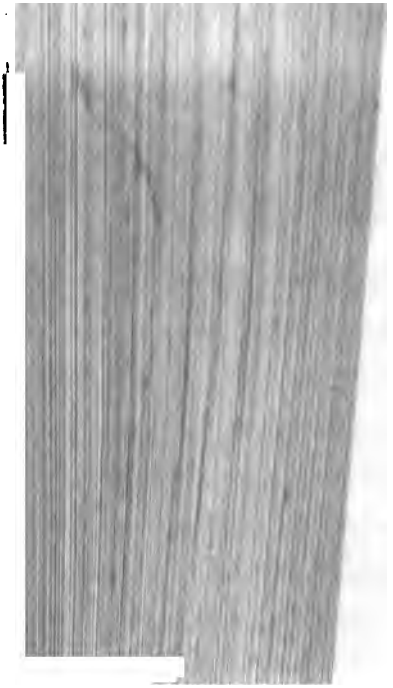
"They are not advanced enough yet for that," said Mr. Cunningham; "the idea of association will require another generation to work out. Association is a new idea for us. We are none of us altogether prepared to carry it out in the details of practical



very much more difficult to practise Some twenty years hence there will be a chance of what you wish for; in the meantime let us work on without weariness. It is early morning yet, but we must do our work where we are sent and where we are placed."

When the school for the men was opened, another was opened for the women and girls. A suitable mistress had been engaged, but it had become Marian's chief employment to attend to it. The females who work in mills are wofully deficient in the knowledge of all that appertains to household matters; and in this school there was an attempt to supply these deficiencies.

Mention has been made of the fine voices with which the people in this neighbourhood are gifted, and one evening in every week Marian devoted to a singing-class. She found, besides, many things



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CHAPTER XV.

WHAT had Albert been doing all this time? After Lady Wollaston's departure, and after the shock that had been caused to his nerves by the visit of her husband had subsided, he began to feel the want of something to occupy him; half from vanity, and half from admiration he attached himself to Mrs. St. George,—the pretty graceful creole, who has already been introduced to the reader at Mrs. Arl's ball. In her Albert met with his match, and Lady Wollaston was revenged.

Mrs. St. George was gratified by the

homage of Albert;—he had increased in value ever since she had been aware that Lady Wollaston cared for him. Those things can never be hidden; and she put forth all her powers of fascination to secure him for her slave.

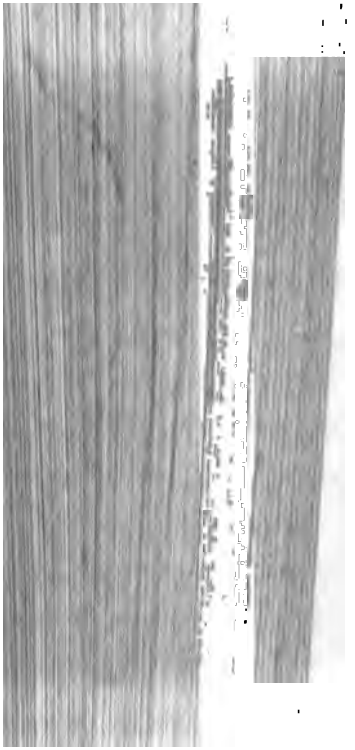
She had no feeling except intense vanity and love of admiration, and therefore felt quite secure; and having the utmost self-reliance and self-control, she could play upon Albert's passions with impunity. Sometimes exciting him to fury by her coldness, and at others making him believe a depth of passion, which, if he could only succeed in winning, would make him perfectly happy. She possessed twice the influence over him that Lady Wollaston had ever done,—and it is needless to say, she was infinitely better treated.

Still she exercised a somewhat sinister

influence over his fortunes. She exacted the most devoted attendance, and expected Albert to be ready at a moment's notice to ride a dozen miles on the most trifling commission; and Albert had his business at the office to attend to.

His natural idleness and disinclination for business, added to his intimacy with Mrs. St. George, had not tended to improve his habits of regularity, and Mr. Arl became greatly dissatisfied with his wife's handsome cousin. He considered commerce the noblest employment for the energies of man; and he felt that Albert had offered a personal slight to himself in being so insensible to its attractions, and he determined to mark his sense of the young man's conduct the first opportunity.

It happened that Mr. St. George was going with a shooting-party to the High-



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George repeated in its sinuous waves. Carl was enjoying his grave meerschaum, and thinking, with the desultory impetuosity of a young man, over all the pretty girls he had been amongst that evening. Albert broke the silence by telling him of Mrs. St. George's invitation down to Scotland. Carl smoked on in silence for some minutes, and then replied,—

"I cannot make out what you are after with that woman, and I cannot understand her either. She might be some transcendental great-grandmother by the way she speaks of you."

"There is the devil of her," said Albert, impatiently jerking away the end of his cigar. "She will let me go on and say the most desperate things, that can have but one meaning; and she must see by my looks the state she has worked me into; and when I am nearly out of my senses,

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enthusiastic young man, and she some mysterious being, not to be touched by mortal feelings. I will make her a declaration to-morrow, if I die for it; and let us see how she will get out of it."

"You had better mind what you are about, Albert. These things lead us farther than we intend. You will get into some scrape or another."

"Not I; there is less impulse in the world than you imagine, my dear fellow. I could stop myself any moment I choose, when I am out of her reach. I do not believe I am in love with her; but I must make her feel that she is a woman, and own my influence,—and then I will be satisfied."

"You mean you will be satisfied when her name has increased your Don Giovanni-like list?"

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And Albert raised his eyes with the air of one supremely disgusted with the part assigned to him in the world. Albert (coxcomb that he was!) thought he saw an omen of success in this invitation, and never dreamed of refusing it.

It so chanced, however, that there was a great press of business in the warehouse just then, in consequence of several large orders which had to be immediately executed; and although Albert's services were not of great value, still it was necessary he should be at his post. It was beneath his dignity formally to solicit leave of absence, but he did casually mention to Arl that he was going with a shooting-party to Scotland. Arl drily informed him that his presence was needed at his place in the office. Albert made no reply; but

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tinue longer. He has thought proper to go into Scotland to-day without leave, and when he comes back he will find his situation filled up. I wish you to tell him that I am tired of his conduct, and desire to see him no more in this house."

"Indeed, I shall give no such message," said Mrs. Arl, indignantly; "poor fellow, what is to become of him, if you turn him away? Mrs. St. George ought not to have invited him; for, of course, he could not refuse anything she chose to ask him to do. You know he is half mad about her. It is shamefully hard to turn him out of his situation just for that."

"I am very glad to get rid of him—he was of no use, and he shall not come back here," replied Mr. Arl.

"You may do as you please in the counting-house; but I shall receive him in this house as usual," said Mrs. Arl, loftily.

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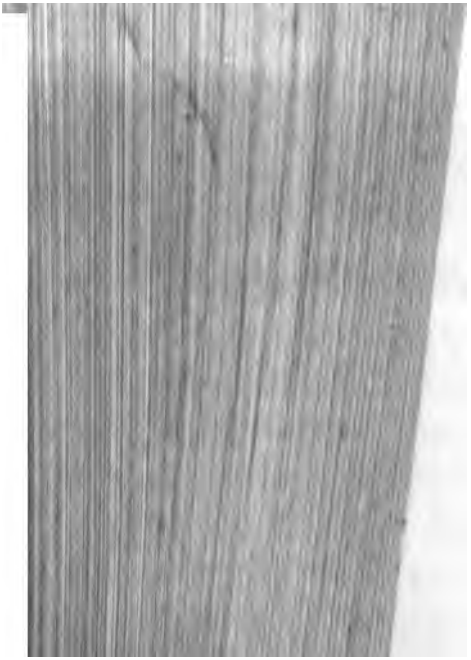
ing her. She, who was always pretending to feel such deep interest in my prospects! I would have avoided this journey, but she gave me a look that drove me mad."

"Well, what said she?" asked Mrs. Arl, observing that he paused.

"She said nothing I could take hold of,—but her look spoke everything; and before we started I recollect saying everything a man could say, which she received with a manner to give one hopes that would have led one to—beyond Scotland. She merely observed, that if I were not reasonable she would not take me with her, and laid her hand on mine to calm me. Well, of course I went, and was treated like a dog. She encouraged a young Scotch laird (the greatest booby I ever saw), and allowed him to walk with her, and to lead her cursed High-



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fellow's '*naïveté*,' 'simplicity,' and 'fresh unsophisticated feelings.' Well, one day I passionately asked her what right she had to trifle with my feelings, and uttered, doubtless, a few extravagances; but not more than she had taken peaceably often enough before—but this time she turned round, with the air of a princess, and declared it was not fitting language to be addressed to 'a married woman'—spoke as if she had been St. Ursula herself—made me a most impertinent address, as though I were an abandoned libertine; and concluded by telling me that she had passed over what I said before we began our journey, hoping that a 'guarded manner' and 'coolness on her part' would bring me back to a sense of propriety, but, that as I had again forgotten myself, I had better return home at once! I was

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of women cannot bear to see any one escape from their toils."

"She will never have *me* back," said Albert, bitterly.

"Well, but what are you going to do with yourself?" asked Mrs. Arl; "I tell you frankly that I have no hope of begging you in with Arl again. Why did you never make up to that charming young heiress Mrs. St. George was always recommending to you?"

"Because she never would let me: I was talking one day about marrying, on purpose to bring in the subject of the heiress; I told her that she should choose my wife; and said a good deal besides to soothe her jealousy. She seemed hurt, and asked me why I wished to marry; that it was a most insipid connection, and that the friendship she had for me was far better than the love of

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joyfully: "What say you to Marian Withers? Since her father entered into partnership with Mr. Cunningham, he has got on wonderfully; he is become quite a leading person in the neighbourhood. Marian was always a nice girl, and now she will have a fortune besides. I know she used to like you, for I recollect feeling quite sorry to see her waste so much good feeling upon you, and I tried to put you out of her head; I am sure she will accept you."

"She is a good little creature; and I was quite inclined to like her at first, only she was so childish."

"Well, then, go at once. I will write to her by you. I will do it this moment; for, to tell the truth, I would rather Arl did not find you here just now. I shall be able to calm him down in time."

Mrs. Arl wrote the letter. I
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written immediately after having
to an explanation with Albert, wh
just confessed that he had, in sp
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and more for Marian, but fancied
she had a prejudice against him!
letter was very eloquent in Albert's

Armed with this missive, Alber
sented himself, two days afterward
fore Marian.

CHAPTER XVI.

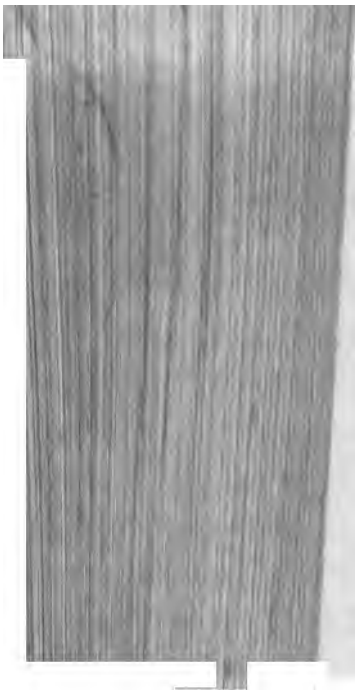
MARIAN was glad to see Albert, certainly very glad; but she was astonished to find that the sight of him caused her no agitation; she wondered at this want of sensibility: still, to hear tidings of her friends, and to receive Mrs. Arl's letter, was very pleasant, and she began to ask Albert a thousand questions,—about Hilda, Mrs. Arl, and Carrisford.

Albert was surprised at the change in Marian. Her person had lost its former insignificant girlish appearance; not that she looked much older, but the develop-

ment of her mind had also moulded her body,—and given a graceful firmness to her motions, quite different from the timid, uncertain shrinking which had formerly characterised her. Her manners, too, had partaken of the same change; they were gentle, natural, and perfectly self-possessed. Albert felt the supercilious urbanity with which he had prepared to consider her quite set aside. He had been soothing his wounded vanity, during the journey thither, with the thought of the timid gratitude and delight with which Marian could not fail to receive the intimation of his imperial intentions; he had also thought, with savage complacency on the rage and vexation which would torment Mrs. St. George, when she should hear of his approaching marriage. But all these thoughts vanished before he had been ten minutes in Marian's pre-

sence, and he found himself awkward and embarrassed, and with a quite novel sentiment of timidity that was anything but re-assuring. Marian was anxious to hear about Hilda, but Albert wished to lead the conversation into another channel, and his replies were absent and confused. Marian began to find him somewhat of a bore.

Alas! this is the very ordinary transformation of those who, having once been invested with the magic glory of love, are at last despoiled of it. Their fascinations and good qualities are then often found to be like fairy gold, which is in reality nothing but dead leaves and stones! When the shining mist of love has vanished, the disenchanted lovers are generally greater bores than the ordinary run of mankind. It is the Nemesis of compensation: having once been idols,



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was, he was not to be trusted. She, however, welcomed him with perfect hospitality, and invited him to stay to dinner.

The conversation flagged. Aunt Alice could only talk when she had anything to say: conversation with her did not rise beyond a simple necessary; it had not become an accomplishment. Marian had opened Mrs. Arl's letter, her desire to read it having conquered her politeness. The contents were not calculated to lessen the embarrassment which was gradually taking possession of her.

At this juncture Mr. Cunningham, who was expected to dinner, entered the room. The sight of Albert seemed to have an unpleasing effect. He saluted him coldly, almost haughtily, shook hands very stiffly with Marian, and, taking up a book, moodily turned over the leaves,—watching Marian, however, very intently from the

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for a more foolish uncomfortable situation cannot well be imagined than that of a man come down express to make an offer, and unexpectedly finding that he has prepossessed nobody in his favour!

At last dinner was announced. Mr. Cunningham put down his book and offered his arm to Aunt Alice; John Withers took Marian's hand, and pulled it under his arm, and motioned Albert to pass before them.

The dinner was a very heavy affair. Albert made several attempts at conversation; he spoke of his excursion to the Highlands, and expatiated upon the beauty of the scenery; he told stories of surprising sportsmanship, but they fell dead on his listeners. John Withers was not clever at general conversation, and he thought Albert was a "very frothy young man,' and not at all a man of business. Mr.

Cunningham had not recovered his usual serenity, and only once broke silence to offer Marian something at table, which he did with the manner of a man who felt that he had been deeply offended. Poor Marian could not understand the meaning of the restraint that had fallen upon them all; but it baffled her efforts to disperse it. She was unhappy too, wondering what she had done to displease Mr. Cunningham.

When the dinner was over, John Withers made an apology for hastening back to the mill; he informed Albert, in answer to his inquiry, "that there was a coach to Manchester at half-past four o'clock," and offered to send some one to secure a place, if he thought of returning by it; but not one word of encouragement did he offer for him to prolong his visit. He brought up a bottle of his best wine, however, from the cellar, and requested Mr. Cun-

ningham to keep Albert company, in his absence.

The mutual agreeableness of the two gentlemen to each other may be imagined! At length Albert resolved to hear from Marian's own lips, what chance he had of success, and rose from the table, saying that he had a message from his cousin to Miss Withers, and would go to her in the next room. Mr Cunningham gave him a look that expressed the greatest readiness to shoot him; but recollecting that Aunt Alice was with Marian, he took his hat, determining that his shrift should be as short as possible.

All these obstacles, and all these disagreeable precautions would only have stimulated Albert's spirit of enterprise, had he been better assured of his interest with Marian herself; but he had very disagreeable misgivings.

When he entered, Marian was at the piano, and Aunt Alice was placidly knitting by the window at the other end of the room, with her back towards them.

Marian looked up and smiled as he came in. "Do you think," said she, "you could give us one song? I have told my aunt so much about your singing, that I should like her to hear you; it would be such a pleasure to her."

"I cannot sing now," said poor Albert, "but let me hear you play;" and sitting down beside the instrument, he affected to be busy looking over the music, and contrived, in broken words and with real timidity, to make her understand that he was come to lay himself at her feet. Albert had always boasted that an opportunity for love-making inspired him with eloquence; but in this case his genius deserted him, he stammered, and blundered, and

scarcely dared to raise his eyes to her face.

Marian was pained and embarrassed by this abrupt declaration. She recollected how happy it would once have made her, and wondered at the change she felt within herself; but her intentions did not waver. A gentle but firm and unambiguous negative was her reply. Albert looked terribly mortified; but he had been so little accustomed to meet with repulses that he could not believe in the reality of Marian's refusal.

"Let me," said he, "at least, hope; let me try to make myself more worthy of you. I will do anything, I will give up anything in the world that is displeasing to you, if you will only allow me to hope that you will at some future time regard me more favourably. I do not ask you to give me an answer now, — I can wait; you

cannot weary my patience. Tell me that I may wait and hope, and I will try to be worthy of you."

"Be worthy for your own sake. But do not go away with a false impression: what I have said, I mean; my answer next year would be what it is to-day. Do not let us talk on this subject,—I cannot tell you how it pains me. I wish you had not told me this."

Marian looked much distressed as she said this; but not a shadow of irresolution crossed her mind, she only earnestly desired to end the conversation.

"I shall hope against hope; and until you are married to another I will not despair of winning you," said he. "I might have gained you once, if I had not been a fool. God bless you Marian! I shall not cease to hope, in spite of all you can say; —I shall live only for you."

He wrung her hand and kissed it,—and without a word of adieu to Aunt Alice, who was dozing in her chair, he rushed from the house and caught the coach as it was starting, and soon lost sight of Burn Brook.

"What have you and that young man been whispering about all this time?" asked Aunt Alice, roused from her slumbers by the hasty exit of Albert; "and where is he gone? I hope he would not think me rude for falling asleep; but I cannot help it after dinner. Did you ask him to stay for tea?"

"No, aunt, he was obliged to return home; but I have a terrible headach, and I snall take a walk till tea-time."

So saying, she quitted the room; she felt the need of silence and solitude to calm her spirits. For though she had not the shadow of a reservation in the refusal she had given Albert, still she could not

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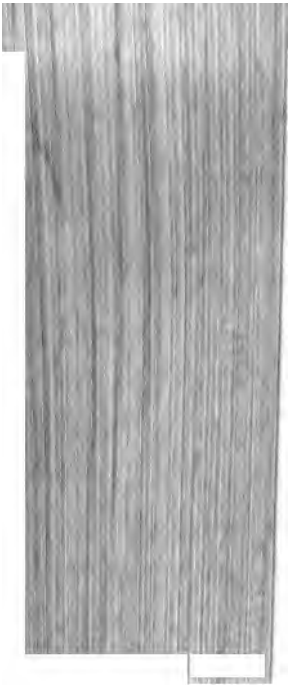
strange; and even now you do not seem as if you were friends with me. What have I done?"

"Nothing. But, why have you left your friend Albert?"

"He is gone. I wish he had never come. Do you know I was thinking what strange things our hopes and wishes are; and how miserable we should be if we were obliged to have what we had most wished for, perhaps only two or three years back. I feel quite frightened when I think of all the foolish wishes I have had. I am so thankful that they were not granted. What would have become of me if all I had most wished had been given me at the time? Yet I suppose I shall go on wishing and hoping to the end."

They had by this time come to the edge of the clough, where they had taken their walk two years previously.



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"Marian, what ails you? What has distressed you? Speak to me; it kills me to see you suffer. What have I done that you turn away from me?"

Marian was startled at the passionate tremulousness of his voice. She looked round for an instant, and he saw that tears were running down her face.

"Marian, what have I done to grieve you?" said Mr. Cunningham. "Tell me, —speak to me!"

"I was hurt," said Marian, in a low voice, "that you should so easily have forgotten that conversation which I have recollected every day, and tried to live by. When I asked you if you recollected it, you seemed to think me very foolish for remembering it better than you did."

"Did I tell you that I had forgotten it?" said Mr. Cunningham. "When you said I had 'scolded you,' the word jarred upon

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as a schoolmaster, and that you do not hate me?"

Marian's face was buried in her hands, and her tears fell unrestrained,—but she did not reply.

"Marian, will you speak to me? Tell me, do you love me? Can you love me?"

Still Marian was silent — the surprise, the happiness she felt at hearing such words, revealed to her the secret of her own heart, which she had never yet acknowledged, but which now asserted itself all the more imperiously for having so long been latent.

"Marian, tell me that you are not displeased," said he,—taking hold of one of her hands. "How am I to know, if you will neither look at me nor speak to me? You are not angry?"

"No, no!" said Marian; "but it seems

too much happiness to be real, that you should care for me. I have felt vexed sometimes, because I thought you looked upon me as a child. How could you think that I should care for Albert after knowing you?"

"Dear Marian!—but you have not looked at me yet. I must see my fate in your eyes."

She raised her face, on which there still remained the traces of tears; but such a look of bright innocent gladness shone through them as completely reassured Mr. Cunningham.

"God bless you, dear Marian! you have made me very happy," whispered he.

When they reached home they were very late for tea, and Aunt Alice was fast losing her patience at being kept so long waiting. John Withers, too, who was sitting in his accustomed corner, did not

look very well pleased. He had not got over the apparition of Albert, and did not exactly know what it might portend. He had come home half an hour earlier than usual to satisfy himself that Marian was quite safe, and her prolonged absence had not soothed his uncomfortable feelings. Marian pressed on to her own room, she felt the need to be alone.

In few a words Mr. Cunningham informed John Withers and Aunt Alice of what had passed.

"I did not think to be glad to part with my lass," said John; "but I am proud to give her to you, Mr. Cunningham: and when I am gone, I shall feel happy to know she is with you."

Mr. Cunningham smiled at this compliment; and if his happiness had been susceptible of increase, it would have been from the frank confidence with which

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CHAPTER XVII.

THERE was no reason why the marriage should be delayed. It was settled that they were to travel for some time on the continent. Marian had an intense desire to see Venice; so it was thither they were in the first instance to direct their steps. In three weeks after the walk we have recorded, Marian and Mr. Cunningham were married in the little parish church. Mr. and Mrs. Wilcox, and an old friend of Mr. Cunningham's, were the only guests invited. Mr. Wilcox was almost as proud as John Withers,

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that Marian should become so unequivocally "a lady," to use her own words; and she muttered a kind of hope that she would not be "set up with her good fortune," nor yet take to Popish ways; and entreated Mr. Cunningham not to take her to theatres and suchlike ungodly places. She, however, drew out of her pocket a wash-leather parcel, containing half-a-dozen quaintly-wrought silver-gilt spoons.

"There, Marian, thou wilt have plenty of fine things, but they don't make such like spoons now-a-days. If I had had a daughter they must have gone to her, but as it is, thou art welcome to them."

The good woman was not insensible to the admiration which both Marian and Mr. Cunningham bestowed upon her present, and then Marian went to find two little parcels which had been sent

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nay, it will never do to send the lass away with a down heart, Mr. Withers." He exerted himself with such good-will, that there was too much bustle about the departure for any one to indulge in sentiment.

A joint letter of congratulation to Marian and her husband, reached them a few days after their marriage from Lady Wollaston. She said that the only wish she had in the world was gratified in seeing Marian married to her cousin.

She was still working with undiminished energy at the task she had undertaken, and spoke very cheerfully of her prospects. She made a promise to come and see them on their return from abroad.

Whilst Marian and her husband were at Naples, they met Mr. and Mrs. Glynton, who was still there for his health, which was growing constantly worse.

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be proud of. Oh, I cannot tell you the humiliation, the misery I suffer. A jealous, selfish, narrow-minded fool at the best was Glynton; and now he is a prematurely decrepid old man, not more than half alive with paralysis; he had no business ever to have married me; I had no notion that his constitution was so shattered. He has not one single good or generous quality about him; he tyrannises over me, and I am losing my health and my beauty by keeping in those hot rooms; and I am obliged to submit, for I am completely in his power. Would you believe it!—the stingy wretch has not made the least settlement upon me; and he will not. I cannot coax him into it. Before we were married, I did not like to look mercenary, and I said nothing about it: but Arl ought not to have allowed such nonsense, it was a very unjustifiable negligence;

but who ever dreamed that Glynton would be so obstinate and malicious? After all I have suffered, I may be left very little better off than I was when I married him: and I am sure I might have done much better. I hate this place: but he fancies it suits him, and the physicians of course persuade him that it does; so there is no chance of our getting away. Oh, what would I give to see England again, and to be free once more! The galley slaves are happy compared with me; but do not tell Mrs. Arl when you write. I do not wish her to know how I am situated. If I could have foreseen the little comfort or credit this match would have brought, I would never have yielded. It is quite aggravating to think of that beautiful place being shut up all this time, whilst we are going about in this miserable manner. I am sure Glynton

would be as well there as here, if he would only think so."

Marian endeavoured to comfort her as well as she could, and suggested the comfort she must be to Mr. Glynton.

"Of course, nobody doubts it; he has laid his scheme for this. He did not marry until the last moment; and then he took care to make sure of a nurse who could not give him warning."

The remainder of the drive was occupied in the same objectless complaining. Marian tried to appeal to her generosity, and to induce her to think of her office as the devotion of a *sœur de charité;* but there was no response in Hilda's heart. Marian was grieved for her. When, however, her husband rejoined her, he told her that Glynton had requested him to witness his will, in which he had made a handsome settlement upon Hilda; but

adding, with the natural astuteness of his character, that he "should keep her ignorant of it, lest she should feel too independent."

"What an emphasis Hilda's case gives to the expression of the 'deceitfulness of riches!' She has them, and yet she has them not."

"Double motives always impoverish," said Mr. Cunningham; "and it is almost better that people should commit a sin with a singleness of purpose, than live doing their duty because they fear to leave it undone."

At length the term of their journey was expired, and they returned home.

Aunt Alice had busied herself to have Mr. Cunningham's house in the most perfect order for her darling, and rejoiced every day in the thought that it was only two miles from Burn Brook. As these

are not the days of Sir Charles Grandison, we shall not enter into the details of all the beauties of the house and park. Aunt Alice was happier than she had ever been in her life—far happier in contemplating Marian's lot than she could have been with anything that had befallen herself.

Lady Wollaston was as good as her word, and came over the ensuing autumn, and spent a month with Mr. and Mrs. Cunningham. She seemed quite strong in health, and had a look of calm contentment which reassured both Marian and Mr. Cunningham on her account. It was evident that her task was not above her strength, and the accounts she gave of the change that had taken place in the town and neighbourhood of Kilcroona almost reconciled them to her living so far from them. At the end of the month, she returned to her labours.

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men's wives. A young planter from Cuba had brought his young wife to New Orleans. Albert saw her, and devoted himself to her; the young planter was a Spaniard, and very jealous—the wife encouraged Albert, and the husband challenged him. Albert's pistol missed fire; but his adversary's shot took effect in Albert's face, fracturing his nose, and completely destroying his chance of disturbing the domestic peace of any husband for the future; and what was still worse, it effectually put a stop to his marriage with the young lady to whom he had intended to offer himself. He was disfigured for life; and finally went to live in the back woods of Canada, where appearances were not of much consequence.

Mrs. Arl continued to live at Carrisford, and kept up her intimacy with Marian with redoubled ardour, now that she was to all

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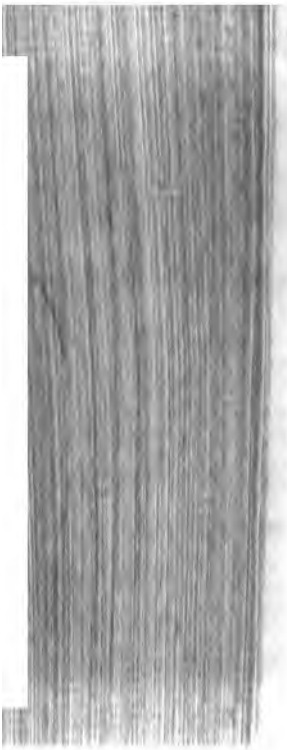
travelling; but this happy arrangement was in some danger of being disturbed by the last accounts of them, for it was rumoured that a dissolution of Parliament was at hand, and then it was confidently reported that Mr. Cunningham would be asked to stand for the county.

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